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THE SOUL OF A CHRISTIAN

A STUDY IN THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

BY

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TO THE

REV. ROBERT VAUGHAN

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"I did greatly long to see some ancient godly man's experience, who had writ some hundreds of years before I was born; for those who had writ in our days, I thought (but I desire them now to pardon me) that they had writ only that which others felt, or else had, through the strength of their Wit and Parts, studied to answer such objections as they perceived others were perplexed with, without going down themselves into the deep."

BUNYAN, *Grace Abounding*, p. 129.

PREFACE

THE Christian experience is deeper, richer, more varied, than is supposed by some and taught by others. It is deeper than we should imagine if we listened only to those who reduce it to the superficial acceptance of a creed; it is richer than appears from the dry and barren summary with which some thinkers are content; and it is far too varied to be exhausted by any single type or group of types. But this book has for its immediate aim neither to praise the Christian religion nor to make converts. It seeks to describe in as scientific a spirit as possible what after all is a fair object for cool reflection. Although religion appeals to the feelings, and is therefore a proper field for the orator, there is an advantage also in *words which speak of nothing more than what we are.* The use of the plain truth ought not to be the last compliment which men pay to their faith. Such an investigation will not be unprofitable for the study of mind generally. The emotions, and again, poetic invention and genius, are not very well understood as yet, even by the professed students of the mind. Perhaps as we approach

these problems from a new standpoint, we may see them in a clearer light.

The reader who finds the opening chapters somewhat hard to follow, is advised to postpone them and to begin with the fourth chapter, in which the different forms of *conversion* are discussed and to proceed from that point to the end. He will then be better placed for the somewhat unfamiliar considerations with which, in the first three chapters, I have tried to plumb some of the soul's recesses. Truth is not all on the surface even in religion.

In the twelfth chapter, I have tried amongst other things to describe the practice of the good man in speaking the truth. Throughout I have assumed that a lie of whatever degree is a vice. And yet I find that there are at least three cases in which even good men sometimes tell lies (p. 276). In Judaea of old, a poet said hastily, though perhaps quite truly, that all men were liars ; so too it seems that in a modern state, all citizens are indirectly accomplices in deceit (p. 277). It is better surely to confess the deep-rooted disorder of human society, and our own inextricable responsibility for it, than to pretend that truth is entirely attained in daily practice. Here I seem to light upon the reason why foreigners charge us with hypocrisy as our national failing. Englishmen are perhaps more straightforward than other nations. But we are apt to blind ourselves to the real nature of the compromises

with principle to which we are driven not less than others. To tell lies is not the greatest sin; the *hypocrite* not only tells lies, but seeks to hide his sin from himself, his fellows, and his God.

SHERWOOD RISE, NOTTINGHAM
February 1900

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THE SOUL OF A CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER I

ON THE METHOD OF THE INQUIRY

Purpose of the book—Difficulties of topic—Choice of sources—Method—Value for psychology—Philosophy of religion—Theology.

IT is the purpose of this essay to describe the Christian life, as far as possible, in the terms, and with the methods, of psychology. At the same time, this task is not undertaken with the idea that the Christian life rests upon an illusion which it is the business of the psychologist to dispel. Such an idea can only arise in the mind of one who entirely misunderstands the principles of method. Each study has its appropriate subject matter and its corresponding standard of validity; and confusion arises when the standard of one science is applied within the field of another science.

Yet there is a point of contact between the spheres of the religious life and of psychological study, to which attention must be drawn before we go any further. Psychology always attempts

to seize upon the genuine character of each experience, as distinguished from the colour which may be put upon it, either by the subject of the experience, or by others. And in the religious life there is a frequent and pressing danger of putting a colour upon experiences, of playing a part. This indeed was the emphatic opinion of the founder of the Christian religion. Hypocrisy, He said, spreads through the life of professedly religious persons, like leaven through meal. But this hypocrisy is not necessarily a conscious one. The fanatic is an unconscious hypocrite. We are on the way to the cure of this failing when we lay hold upon what is undoubtedly real, and discard what is merely appearance.

Hence it is that, amidst the immeasurable quantity of religious literature, there is but little which is truly available for our investigation. For nearly all religious literature has the intention of edifying, of leading men outside themselves to something higher. And there would seem to be an inevitable conflict between this intention and the attitude of an impartial observer. If you describe things as in your opinion they ought to be, you will probably, nay, almost certainly, fail to lay due emphasis on every aspect of things as they are. And that which holds good of the outer world, also holds of the inner life; the idealist who looks for the best, or the worst, of outer things, is under a severe temptation to alter the perspective of the spiritual experience.

Hence there are very few sermons, amid all the multitude that have been at any time delivered, which sincerely reveal the soul of the preacher, as it is in the sight of the Eternal. It may be replied, that it is the special business of sermons to comfort and console; but that is just the reason—perhaps the necessary reason—why we cannot make use of them now. Yet there have been preachers who have made the interior life the key by which to unlock the hearts of their audiences; who having been sincere with themselves first of all, have then spoken as men to men. But this can only be done in the language of the soul, a dialect which each must construct for himself, piecing together an alphabet from his own heartstrings.

A similar reason will prevent us from finding much help in ecclesiastical history, and in the biographies of religious persons. Either we have, instead of the plain fact, "an exaggerated and unnatural panegyric," or a moral is hung upon every possible peg. But to use Goethe's trenchant phrase, God is not like the inn-keeper who presents his reckoning every Saturday. Hence ecclesiastical histories are only available so far as they contain contemporary documents and sources, letters and speeches. One of the finest portraits of Athanasius is limned in the pages of Gibbon, and St Bernard is perhaps best presented in the work of another avowedly non-Christian writer, Cotter Morison. The reason

is not far to seek: Gibbon and Cotter Morison could write with their eye upon the object. They were not distracted by the wish to turn their heroes to spiritual profit. For the student cannot remain content with the method of the partisan religious historian. There is nothing which is not spoilt by touching up, and biography perhaps suffers as much as anything. *Heart speaks to heart*, as the motto runs of one, who under compulsion bared his very soul to the world. And so I repeat without further apology that sermons and ecclesiastical histories and the biographies of religious persons do not, as a rule, unveil completely the soul of a Christian.

Where then is this kind of truth to be sought? It is to be sought at the fountain head, in those journals and autobiographies and letters which are the vehicles of an original and living experience, and not merely the reflections of Scripture and Creed, repeated in an alien medium. The field is not so large as we might expect, and the comparatively few authorities to which reference will be made in these pages, form a considerable proportion of the material which is available for our purpose.

But the appeal which we shall continually make to the individual experience involves a certain divergence from the ordinary procedure of the psychologist, or rather an extension of it, an application of it, to a special subject-matter. The modifications which we shall be compelled to

make can only become clear as the topic we are studying is developed. Tertullian, in his book *Upon the Soul*, claims to "free common opinions from the subtleties of thinkers by referring them to sacred literature."[1] Paraphrasing this, we may say that we shall not limit the religious experience by the canons of psychology, but rather, on the contrary, we shall extend the latter to take in this special subject.

For we shall find reason to hold that the common rule of advancing from the familiar and accessible fact to that which is less known, is not applicable here. We shall, perhaps, be in immediate contact with the real all the way, but the later stages of our journey will be not less, but more, of a revelation than the earlier ones. Hence the part of experience which is held in common possession, is not necessarily a clue to the specific experiences of the religious life.

How, then, is the comparative method to be applied if the religious experience is unique? How are we to rise from the isolation of the solitary experience to the objective character required by scientific method? The distinction between the higher reaches of the religious experiences and the common experience, does not take away the likeness to be traced in the lives that sometimes have reached that higher level. There are strong analogies between careers as diverse in circumstance as those of Paul and

[1] par. 2.

Augustine, and Bunyan, and Wesley and Newman. We shall try to get at the meaning of these analogies by setting them in their proper context, or, as the same idea may be put, in their proper universe.[1] Here we meet with a form of fallacy which is exceedingly frequent, not only in the study of the religious life but in psychology generally. The nature of an experience is determined, not only by its own form, but by that of its accompaniments. At least this would seem to hold good of all higher experiences. Hence it might even be said that an experience formally the same, is differenced in different persons by what goes with it. And, in particular, it may be said that, apart from the universe to which it belongs, the single religious experience in itself is meaningless. We cannot, therefore, be content with a mere enumeration of isolated states as an account of the religious life. We must view its various elements in their inter-connection, and in their relations within a systematic unity, that is to say, within the sphere of the religious ideal.

Now it is to be noticed that this ideal is only pointed at — not realised — in each successive moment of the religious experience. The ideal is like a word of which the successive experiences are the letters. "It is the peculiarity of the human mind that it cannot take an object in, which is submitted to it, simply and integrally.

[1] A universe denotes the sphere of meaning within which an idea holds good.

It conceives by means of definition or description ; whole objects do not create in the intellect whole ideas, but are, to use a mathematical phrase, thrown into series, into a number of statements, strengthening, interpreting, correcting each other, and with more or less exactness approximating as they accumulate to a perfect image." [1]

But, further, not only is the religious ideal incapable of being presented fully in a single experience ; it is only partially realised in the complete course of the individual life. Only in the religious society as an organic whole can it be displayed. Hence the religious ideal is specialised in the lives of individuals in such a way that they bring out its meaning through their union within the Church. If each man may be said in his life to spell out a word, the complete sentence in which religious thought is expressed may be said to be uttered by the religious society. There is a suggestive parable of this in the legend which describes the origin of the Apostles' Creed. It is said that the twelve apostles being assembled together, made in succession the declarations which, taken together, form the creed, as though a single mind was unable to be the organ of the complete Christian thought.

We are at once brought up by the objection that the experiences of the apostolic age may not be compared with those of later times : it is main-

[1] Newman, *Essay on Development*, 94.

tained, for example, that the visions of St Paul stand on quite a different footing from those of St Teresa.[1] It may indeed turn out that the visions of St Paul are of a different character from those of the Spanish saint, but if that is the case, and the difference is a thoroughgoing one, we ought surely be able to detect the fact for ourselves. Again, to take another example, the room where the apostles were gathered together at Pentecost, is said to have been shaken in a mysterious way. I seem to myself to understand this fact better when I read in George Fox's *Journal* that at Mansfield "the house seemed to be shaken. Some of the professors said it was now as in the days of the apostles, when the house was shaken where they were." And the suggestion of "the professors" is a very likely one. It is very easy to say that Fox was in error and that the house was not shaken, but Fox was there and the critics were not. At any rate, George Fox believed that the building was shaken, and from our present point of view, this is enough.

The distinction, then, that is sometimes drawn between the miraculous character of apostolic times, and the non-miraculous character of later times, breaks down. We must not be frightened from meeting the truth face to face by any artificial limits of what is possible. The study of the religious experience extends our estimate of the powers of the human mind.

[1] Herrmann, *Communion with God*, E. Trans., 223, 224.

We shall not be prevented, therefore, from employing the comparative method within the limits laid down. Not only so, we shall be content with a merely subjective view of evidence. It is outside the plan of this essay to seek a proof of those external events which, whether exactly described or not, have no immediate bearing upon the inner life. It is the business of the historian to determine the objective truth of a narrative ; the student of the mind regards belief in an event as equivalent to the event itself, for the purposes of some inquiries, and this seems to be an inquiry of such a kind. And, on the other hand, the historian is bound to take account of beliefs, although they are without support in immediate fact. Still more is he bound to take account of beliefs which, in themselves, carry a certain presupposition in favour of their object.

Among the difficulties which attach to the study of the Christian life in its historical manifestations, not the least is the diversity of belief and practice which seem to render any general account of it impossible. But this diversity is in reality more on the surface than at first sight appears. The complexity of the religious ideal, the difficulty of realising it completely within any given conditions, gives occasion to misunderstandings. Hasty thinkers jump to the conclusion that that part of the Christian ideal which does not answer to their point of view is superfluous or even harmful, and on the other hand they bring into undue promi-

nence those provinces of religious truth which have affected them most deeply. But when we rise from the view of a single age to the general history of the Christian Church, and from the conditions imposed by the genius of a single race, and the circumstance of its life, to the qualities demanded by a universal church, we begin to feel the need of caution, of a spiritual disinterestedness which is content to forego private inclinations and prejudices in the interests of a truly catholic faith. At the same time, such a temper as this will not feel itself bound to reject the particular expressions of religious feeling which seem to break in upon this ideal unity. It is only when a single truth is presented in such a way as to obscure the claims of other truths upon the intellect and the heart that it becomes dangerous, and, in the scientific sense of the word, heretical. Perhaps I may single out two principles which are often overlooked in reflecting about religion. There is the principle of Revelation, and the principle of Parsimony.

The principle of Revelation has already been anticipated; it is this: that the data of the Christian philosophy must be accepted as "given" to the reason which argues from them. Of course this does not close inquiry about the limits of what is "given" on the one hand, and of what we infer on the other. But the positive and historical side of the Christian tradition can never be interpreted by any method which, like that of Strauss,

treats the whole Christian system as a mental creation.

The principle of Parsimony instructs us how we are to deal with what is "given." We must not take statements in their fullest application, but rather incline to an underestimate—not of religious truth in its depth and power—but of the amount to which that truth depends on any one fact. Statements, which, taken singly, are but probabilities, serve in sum to establish a reasonable certainty, and this is changed by faith into a moral certainty. This principle will be illustrated in the chapter on the Oversoul.

The inquiry upon which we are engaged, and of which the method has been roughly sketched, will be of interest to the psychologist, the student of the philosophy of religion, and to the theologian.

Ribot, in his *Psychology of the Emotions*, points out that there is a great field for the psychological student in "the part played by the emotions and passions in human life."[1] Now they can only be studied to any profit amid the stresses of particular experiences such as those with which we are to be engaged. Further, the very fulness and reality of the religious life promises more even to the student of general psychology than the desiccated skeletons of experiences which are trailed over the pages of an abstract analysis. "Shall the spiritual world," Kingsley asks, "be limited by us to the merest commonplaces of

[1] *Pref.*

everyday experience?"[1] We shall consider, therefore, in the chapter upon *the depths of the soul*, how far the ordinary analysis of experience is really exhaustive. Again, some contemporary psychologists look anxiously for traces of disease in everything which is at all uncommon, and they are thus led to exaggerate the morbid character of the mystical experience. For example, Dr Tylor thinks that a full meal would close the gates of paradise to most ascetic visionaries.[2] I do not think it would be as doubtful a statement if it should be affirmed that abstemious living would open the gates of the visionary world to everybody. At any rate some physiologists maintain that normal digestion is of very rare occurrence. Suppose that heaven is literally lying about us still, and that fasting of a genuine character is necessary to see it. I do not say that this is the case, because I have never undertaken the amount of fasting that might be necessary. But the supposition is worth making, if only as a check to our presumption of what is possible. Large numbers of dyspeptic writers have proved that Blake was mad because he saw visions. The other alternative takes the breath away. Suppose that his experience is the more truly normal one!

The idea of the average must therefore be distinguished from the idea of the normal. The

[1] Preface to *Life and Sermons of Tauler*.
[2] *Primitive Culture*, ii. 415.

average person is dyspeptic more or less. The normal experience therefore—to take even this standpoint—is not the same as the average one.

Again, the normal experience of the individual must be viewed as part of a social life. The individual reaches complete satisfaction — not within himself—but in the whole life of which he is a member. As such he will have his own office to perform, and in proportion as the society becomes more perfectly organised, the diversity between the different functions it imposes will also increase. Hence the normal member of such a community may sacrifice a great portion of his capacities to the performance of one or two special duties. In one sense, it may be said that his nature is cramped and dwarfed; but the society which exacts these sacrifices may more than compensate them in the realisation of the common ideal to which he contributes, and in which he shares. Hence the poet and the inventor and the discoverer are not proved to be morbid types by the extent to which they diverge from the average. And what holds good of them holds good also of the religious genius. The religious genius is not proved to be morbid by the extent to which he diverges from the average type. Moreover, the natures of these special types throw light one upon another. There are analogies between the mental outfit of Bunyan and of Blake, and the nature of religious inspiration helps to the understanding of the poet's mind.

But this very common life which enables us to interpret these special types, sets a problem of great difficulty. The familiar individualist psychology seems unable to deal adequately with it, and this for an obvious reason. The subject of the religious ideal seems to be more than individual, and indeed to be capable within itself of distinction into persons. The doctrine of the Trinity, for example, seems to be rather a formula for the religious life in its ultimate nature than an isolated and inexplicable mystery. Or to speak in a less theological manner, the fact of freewill — to use the popular phrase — in an ordered universe, involves implicitly just the distinction of persons within one substance, which is rendered explicit in the doctrine in question. I can quite imagine someone to object that such doctrines are purely hypothetical constructions, and that if we refuse to grant the postulates on which they rest, they fall to the ground. But we are not now concerned with the doctrines themselves but with the psychological facts at which they seem to point. I shall try, therefore, to single out that aspect of the common experience with which psychology is perhaps competent to deal, and to consider whether after all Emerson's hypothesis of *oversoul* deserves the contemptuous silence with which it has been passed over.

In the next place, the philosophy of religion has something to learn from psychology. Unless its terms can be translated back into the specific

experience, it has no guarantee against being deceived by purely fantastic creations which the abstract understanding sometimes decks out in a spectral garb. The *particular* is as profound a notion as that of the *universal* to which it is related. As a matter of fact it is nearer than the *universal* to the notion of the *individual*, in which thought approaches its culmination. For the ideal in which thought culminates is realised, not in the abstract, but in the organised society of which the individual is a component.

In fact it may be said that the universal is merely the scaffolding through which the particular is transformed into the individual, and that when its work is done its meaning ceases too. For, as we have seen, each life tends to run a unique course of its own, and there is no universal mould into which it can be fitted. Hence the implicit attitude of mind, which in religion is called faith, can only be rendered self-conscious by using general terms, by distinguishing it from what conflicts with it: but this act of distinction is unimportant compared with the initial apprehension. Description and definition do not create their objects, they simply draw lines round them, and thus separate them from what they are not. If we take *feeling*, *reflection*, *intuition* to represent the three stages of belief, we see that in the second stage the soul, as it were, goes outside of its possessions. It no longer speaks from within, or from experience as a party and possessor

of the fact, but "from without as a spectator, merely, or perhaps as acquainted with the fact on the evidence of third persons."[1] I remember reading somewhere, I think with reference to Renan, that anyone who was to write a history of religion, must have once believed but have ceased to believe. What, I suppose, was demanded by this second qualification, was the power of detaching oneself from the subject. Yet the sympathy which comes of the first condition, that, namely of belief, is perhaps the more important of the two.

Since, therefore, the specific feeling refuses to submit to formulæ which rather describe what it is not, than what it is, it turns out that the divisions which separate soul from soul are less transparent than formal logic likes to assume. Hence we shall be prepared to find a greater difficulty in reflecting upon the distinctions and likeness which hold of the various religious types than is usually expected. The very emphasis which it is necessary to lay upon the unique character of the religious, as of other forms of life, will make us more attentive to those regions of experience where the division between soul and soul breaks down. Here we approach again from a different standpoint the problem which psychology finds in determining the subject of the complete religious experience. The fact that souls can enter into communion with one another

[1] Emerson, Essay on *The Oversoul.*

is an assumption which psychology makes for itself, but which surely it is the business of the philosophy of religion to examine. It is at least an admissible hypothesis that the communication of minds is through some common ground, that the communication of soul with soul is not entirely accounted for by the indirect modes of inference described by Mr Spencer.[1] This topic will be dwelt upon in the third chapter.

There is a difference between theology and the philosophy of religion. Theology implies that a particular standpoint is taken up in religious matters, whereas the philosophy of religion would seem to view all standpoints in an external manner. The philosophy of religion deals with its subject as related to human experience generally, whereas theology tends to confine itself within the limits laid down by tradition, whether the tradition take the form of certain documents, or certain institutions, or both of these together. Ritschl, for example, says that the formation of the leading ideas in systematic theology must proceed throughout upon specifically New Testament views.[2] But soon after he indicates the need of a reference to psychology by saying that "every change in theology presupposes changes in the religious and ecclesiastical consciousness.[3] In fact, theology in the narrower sense is now passing over

[1] *Principles of Psychology*, Part I., c. 7.

[2] *History of Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, Eng. Trans., p. 3.

[3] *Op. cit.*, 18.

into a philosophy of religion. It is no longer possible to isolate the Old and New Testaments from all other records, nor again the Christian experience from all other experiences. Yet this very act of comparison is far from implying that what is characteristic in the Christian faith is to be merged in some abstraction. Comparison emphasises differences as well as resemblances. Christianity is in some respects like the nature religions, but it is infinitely more unlike them. It is only by comparison, as we have seen, that what is really characteristic is brought to light.[1] Hence the transformation of theology in the narrower sense to a philosophy of religion, means that Christian beliefs, instead of being treated as out of relation to the rest of thought, are brought into relation with it, and at the same time distinguished. And what holds concerning the objective elements in the Christian tradition, holds with reference to the Christian experience. While, as we have seen, psychology must not unduly limit the possibilities of that experience, it is also true that any account of the Christian experience must satisfy the ordinary tests of what is real. I remember—if this reminiscence may be excused—being perplexed when I was about seventeen years old, by what was told me concerning the process of conversion, and I asked some of those who professed to know something about the religious life, what was meant by con-

[1] P. 6, Jevons, *Introduction to the History of Religion*, 3.

version, or rather what took place in it. The answers that I received raised more difficulties in my mind than they removed. My informants simply repeated to me the terms in which the writers of the New Testament speak of the life of the soul, and they seemed to employ in their explanations a dialect which was never applied by them to the common things of life. Of course I found in conversation as time went on, that my experience was repeated in other cases where the discipline of school had cultivated the habit of determining the meaning of words. I was not surprised then to find that this not infrequent experience was also that of Newman. "In 1821 he had been drawing up at great length an account of the Evangelical process of conversion in a series of scripture texts, going through its stages of conviction of sin, terror, despair, news of the free and full salvation, apprehension of Christ, sense of pardon, assurance of salvation, joy and peace, and so on to final perseverance: and he there makes this N.B. upon his work:

"I speak of conversion with great diffidence, being obliged to adopt the language of books. For my own feelings were so different from any account I have ever read that I dare not go by what may be an individual case."

It is only right to say that "at various times of his life, as, for instance, after the publication of his 'Apologia' letters, kindly intended, were addressed to him by strangers or anonymous

writers, assuring him that he did not yet know what conversion meant." [1]

However, this may be, unless theology can put its statements into the terms of the living experience it is reduced to the merest wordspinning. The method described by Newman can only retain its authority by the help of a fallacious theory of verbal inspiration,[2] and now that this idol of the theatre seems in a fair way to be exploded, the method of which it was the foundation must go with it. I do not mean that the truths of theology are necessarily within the scope of the tavern and the street. The beer-jug and the mid-day sporting tissue appeal to one set of feelings; the communications of the seer appeal to another set. The experience which furnishes us with the needful touchstone is that of the religious life, and for this we must have recourse to those who have best lived that life, that is to say—using a term which has a quite definite meaning—the saints. For a saint is one who displays in a special degree the excellences which characterise the Christian ideal. In order, then, to understand the New Testament and the history

[1] *Letters of J. H. Newman*, vol. i., 108, 109.

[2] Notice that what was called verbal inspiration really stood for an arbitrary and unhistorical method of interpreting the Bible, which entirely contradicted the true inspiration of the biblical books. It distinguished neither the degree nor the mode of inspiration; treated history, drama, poetry, and prophecy, as exactly equivalent in the expression of religious truth. The verbal inspiration of this complex literature is a fact for us, if we are willing to recognise the differences of degree and of intention.

of the Christian Church, we must make use of the psychology of the saints. The church of each age is the living commentary upon the Christian tradition. The life of Jesus can only be understood, and the imitation of Jesus is only possible, by the great mass of mankind, so far as the ideal which He embodied is reflected in the Christian society. There is then no century which can claim the exclusive and plenary possession of Christian truth, neither the first, nor the third, nor the thirteenth, nor the sixteenth, nor the nineteenth. And yet, perhaps, there is no age which has not contributed some revelation to the sum of truth. Hence we may not omit one of the nineteen centuries which bind the present, as by a golden chain, to the life of the carpenter.

And so, as we study the lives of saints and mystics in the most direct and intimate manner possible, we are, as it were, in the workshop of the religious spirit on its contemplative side. The autobiographies, say of St Augustine or of St Teresa, furnish a touchstone by which we may test religious formularies. Their rich emotional life wells up in thoughts, many of which are fit to become the germs of whole systems of thought. It is almost the opposite of what seems the case, to say with Herrmann that "Greater and higher than all religious emotion within the Christian, there rises and towers religious thought."[1] On the contrary, thought enters into the Christian

[1] *The Communion of the Christian with God*, p. 39.

intuition mainly as the negative determination of feeling. Let us take a single example. The different attributes of the divine nature are so combined in the life of Jesus that He exhibits them in their relation to one another so far as this is possible within the limits of a human life. Herrmann, in *The Communion of the Christian with God*, has for his main object to show what is an incorrect inference from this principle, that "we do not merely come through Christ to God, but that we find nothing in God but Christ."[1] The German thinker merely gives exaggerated expression to a thought which St Teresa puts far more vividly in a single poetic phrase. "I see clearly and since then have always seen that if we are to please God, and if He is to give us great graces, everything must pass through the hands of His most sacred Humanity, in Whom His Majesty has said that He is well pleased."[2] But the Spanish saint has left many thoughts as suggestive as this.

[1] P. 26. [2] *Life* translated by Lewis c. xxii., par. 9.

CHAPTER II

THE DEPTHS OF THE SOUL

Empirical psychology inadequate—Discursive method and intuition—Coming to God—Augustine—Gaining of soul—Poetic apprehension—Religion and science—Blake's philosophy and life—Blake as mystic—Mysticism defined and distinguished from vision and symbolism.

A FEW years ago it would have been considered extravagant to suggest that the soul had any secrets which lay beyond the reach of the discursive understanding. As against the mystic, the systematic thinker observed an amused and contemptuous silence. He refused to recognise the inadequacy of his own methods which were governed in the main by the analogies of physical science. Now, just as the methods of psychology have been extended in one direction, namely, that of psychophysics, so it would seem that they may be capable of extension in other directions, and in particular in the direction suggested by the mystical temper.

We have already seen that the idea of the average is capable of being misapplied in psychology. There is another assumption which vitiates psychological method, namely, that it is possible to interpret the whole range of conscious-

ness from within the limits of the individual life. And these two sources of error seem to be linked together. So long as psychology deals with the individual mind regarded in isolation, it will be confined to the merest commonplace, and will thus fail to deal with what is truly distinctive. Considering descriptive psychologies in the light of works of fiction, the imaginary hero whose symptoms are described, is usually like a victim chained in the prison of dulness. When once, however, we pass from the individual to the social life in which alone he is possible, the case is changed. We are now able to regard each experience set over against other experiences, as unique. Hence while some experiences are deeper or wider than others, there is none which limits all others to itself.

Hence the whole method of psychology has to be modified. There are parts of life in which not only the contents of the experience are, as always, isolated, but the mode of their presentation is unique. In other words the common denominator of human life is relatively limited, not only in the products, but in the processes of experience. There is a difference not only in degree, but in kind, between the heroic and the commonplace. Maeterlinck is almost justified in his exaggeration of an overlooked truth when he says, "All that does not go beyond experimental and daily wisdom is unworthy of the soul."[1]

[1] *Trésor des Humbles*, 164

There is another limitation to the method of psychology which is specially important at this point. Psychology can mark off and classify the products of consciousness; it is almost unable to seize the processes. It is like an anatomy of the soul separated from a physiology. The introspective method, as it were, can portray the rainbow above the waterfall. It cannot fix the descent of the spray, nor the passage of the refracted rays. And the soul is revealed far more in what it does than in what it says. We may seize, abstract, define certain superficial aspects of its life, but we are bound also to engage in the almost insuperable task of finding out the secrets of its working, or else our thoughts about the soul become dry and barren. If, then, we wish to see the soul really portrayed, we find it in the drama of the masters of human passion, rather than in the more abstract presentations of psychology. For feeling is the fountain of consciousness, and the psychologists have never yet succeeded in dealing with it satisfactorily. "There are things so sublime," says St John of the Cross, "that their proper idiom is for them to be perceived, felt and wrapped in silence."[1] From age to age some poet or seer or man of action reveals a little of the mystery, but mystery grows too fast for revelation to keep pace with it.

"The merely descriptive literature of the emotions is one of the most tedious parts of psychology. And not only is it tedious, but you feel that its

[1] *Living Flame of Love*, verse ii., line 4.

subdivisions are to a great extent either fictitious or unimportant, and that its pretences to accuracy are a sham. But unfortunately there is little psychological writing about the emotions which is not merely descriptive. As emotions are described in novels they interest us, for we are made to share them. We have grown acquainted with the concrete objects and emergencies which call them forth, and any knowing touch of introspection which may grace the page meets with a quick and feeling response. . . . But as far as 'scientific psychology' of the emotions goes, I should as lief read verbal descriptions of the shapes of the rocks on a New Hampshire farm as toil through them again. They give nowhere a central point of view, or a deductive or generative principle."[1] Professor James' remedy for this sad state of things is to represent feeling as an echo of psychological states. Thus we are sorry because we cry, rejoice because we laugh, and not the contrary. But even these considerations only apply to the more superficial aspects of emotion. They do not take us into the depths where the springs of conduct are touched. "Though you trod every path," says Heraclitus, "you could not find the limits of the soul, so deep is its essence."[2]

This bankruptcy of psychology is not inexplicable. Consciousness is not merely a physical fact, and what is specially characteristic of the human consciousness cannot be expressed in

[1] *Principles of Psychology*, ii. 448. [2] Fr. 71.

physical analogies. Love, deliberate purpose, creative invention cannot be formulated universally in an exhaustive manner. While, therefore, we are not going to deny the validity in its degree of reasoning by general notions, they yield now to a higher form of apprehension. The individual is the highest form that the universal can take for the absolute idea, or, as it has been said by Lotze, the individual person is, in a sense, a species. On the other hand, in the physical world, the notion of individual is almost meaningless. One crystal is like another in its kind. But, as we rise towards the world of persons, comparison becomes less and less exhaustive of the nature of things, until in the world of feeling we have to deal with objects that have to be taken each for themselves. We must not think, therefore, of emotion as though it could be separated from its circumstances; it is a phase of the whole being, and not a detachable attribute. Hence the masters of the spiritual life have often been but indifferent exponents of the more formal and abstract qualities of mind, while the formal psychologist has often lacked grip of the deeper realities of experience. Mill, in his *Autobiography*, has described in classical terms the distinction with which we are now concerned.[1] Speaking of Carlyle he says: "I did not deem myself a competent judge of Carlyle. I felt that he was a poet, and that I was not; that he was a man of intuition, which I was not; and

[1] P. 176.

that as such he not only saw many things before me, which I could only, after they were pointed out to me, hobble after and prove, but that it was highly probable he could see many things which were not visible to me, even after they were pointed out. I knew that I could not see round him, and could never be certain that I saw over him." It would be hard to match the exquisite candour of this passage, in which Mill himself disclosed his own unaffected greatness of mind.

The course of the spirit, therefore, baulks prediction. "The wind blows where it will. You hear its sound, but cannot tell where it blows from, nor whither it is going. It is like the children of the Spirit." It is impossible, then, to prophesy the course which any soul will run, least of all one on which circumstance presses lightest. And if the mystery of the individual life grows upon us as we consider it, still more is this the case with national life. The average and commonplace does not represent the nation so well as its heroes. On the contrary, "the true mind of a nation at any time is best ascertainable by examining that of its greatest men."[1]

How are we to give formal expression to this truth, namely, that the soul moves to its destination through a series of surprises? "On this path man neither comes nor goes by footsteps, nor intervals of space."[2] Distances are rather to be

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, iii. 193.
[2] Augustine, *Confessions*, i. 18.

measured by change of feeling, nay, more than a change, by what is like a new creation. It is a kind of birth to reach further or rise higher towards the centre of things. "We can thus be born more than once," says Maeterlinck, "and at each of these births we draw a little nearer to our God."[1] The phrase of a new birth is thus but a symbol thrown around a spiritual fact, and we must be on our guard lest the symbolism, which is the necessary and yet imperfect representation of that which transcends physical conditions, be taken in a literal sense. "For we must know," St John of the Cross declares, "that the soul, so far as it is spirit, has nothing high or low, nothing more or less deep in its essence, like bodies that can be measured by quantity. There is no difference between what is within and what is without. Leaving this meaning of a material and quantitative centre and depth on one side, we call that the soul's deepest centre which is the furthest goal to which its essence, virtue, and power of movement and operation can reach; and this centre is God. Love unites the soul to God, and the more degrees of love the soul holds, so much the more deeply does it enter into God, and is concentrated into Him."[2]

We are not venturing then upon any theory of successive births, "the drear outworn speculation so familiar to us all these many years past, wherewith the Esoteric Buddhist has traduced the greatest

[1] *Trésor des Humbles*, 256.
[2] *Living Flame of Love*, verse i., line 3.

spiritual influence in Asia." [1] It is also a serious question whether the teaching of Jesus is not caricatured when the symbols in which He clothed it are petrified. There is a sect, I have been told, which goes out upon the tiles to preach, because Jesus said, "what ye hear in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops." And this error is a parable. The new birth, then, is not to be identified with the phantasmagoria of the spiritualist, nor is it to be confused with the figurate ideas through which it is expressed. The kingdom of Heaven, to which the new birth is a vestibule, is a kingdom of the spirit, and has the spiritual for its main characteristic whatever the visible shapes are in which it is realised.

When this line of thought is followed out, some religious minds begin to be apprehensive of rationalism. Two considerations will perhaps be enough here. In the first place, the spiritual has for its necessary correlative in human apprehension, the visible through which it is realised. And again, the highest form of the reason is not that which deals with abstractions merely, but that which is conversant with the real, of which the abstract reason has merely marked off successive aspects. So also the will is not something that finds expression in this or that isolated act, but rather reveals itself in the attitude of the soul to the whole universe of ends. Hence the life which is truly spiritual is not to be thought of as that of an abstract reason,

[1] Fiona Macleod in the *Dome*, ii. 209.

or of an abstract will, set over against the life of the senses and natural impulses, but as including and transfiguring all these constituent factors. If, then, it is said that the union of the Christian with God takes place in the will, it is difficult to imagine any union more profound or intimate. We must not think of a merely superficial assent of the mind to an isolated thought or motive: in such a process as this the soul is merged in the over-soul and touches the Eternal, or rather is touched by it.

In coming to God, the soul also finds itself. The life of the soul—in its ultimate form as the life of the spirit—consists in this: that "the life of life," to use Augustine's phrase, is repeated, reflected, or realised at an individual centre, and this in such a way that the individual while he shares in the common life, at the same time contributes something of his own towards it.

It is now clear, perhaps, why the history of the soul cannot be interpreted from within itself. This history is like a riddle with two answers; one is found within, the other, in the whole system of things. And so in detail; the several processes of the soul's life in its higher stages, consist in the modification of the world-process by the conditions of the centre at which it is being mirrored and at the same time partially enacted.

Hence the psychology of the depths of the soul must be written again for every single case. To show how perhaps this might be done, we

will take two instances, almost extreme ones, of the religious life. Augustine shall portray for us the religion of the orator and thinker, and Blake shall illustrate the form which the one religious ideal takes upon itself in the mind of a painter and poet.

Augustine describes the manner in which he gained at one time self-knowledge and knowledge of divine things, in the following terms: "I entered with Thee for guide into the depths of my soul, and found the power to do so because Thou wast my helper. I entered and saw with a certain eye of my mind, an unchanging light—not this common light which is visible to all flesh —shining above that same eye of my mind, and beyond my mind. And it was not like a greater light of the same kind as that of the sun, but very far different. Nor was it above my mind in the way in which oil floats upon water, nor as the sky is higher than the earth: but it was higher because it made me, and I was made by It. The man who knows the truth, knows that Light, and the man who knows that Light knows the Eternal. Love knows it, O eternal Truth, and true Love and beloved Eternal! Thou art my God, for Thee I sigh by day and night. And as soon as I knew Thee, Thou didst take me up so that I saw that to exist on which I looked, and that I who looked, did not yet exist. And Thou didst strike the weakness of my sight, shining strongly upon me, and I shivered with love and horror, and I

found that I was far from Thee in the region of unlikeness, as though I heard the voice from on high: '*I am the food of grown men, grow and thou shalt eat Me; nor shalt thou change Me into thyself as the food of thy flesh, but thou shalt be changed into Myself.*' And I knew that Thou hast schooled man for his iniquity, and hast made my mind to waste away like a spider, and I said is Truth then nothing, since it is diffused neither through finite nor through infinite space? And Thou didst shout from afar, *I am that I am.* And I heard as a man hears in his heart, and there was no doubt left in me, and I would rather doubt my own life, than that the truth did not exist which is seen being understood through the things which are made." [1]

The unity of the soul is thus something to be reached after and found both within God and within itself. "I collected myself," says Augustine, "from the dispersion wherein I turned from Thee, the One, and was vainly divided." [2] The soul is not there to begin with but must be gained. "When we are distracted with contending impulses, there is a spiritual sadness because the soul does not rise altogether, being lifted up by the truth, but weighted down by custom." [3] This effort after unity with oneself is usually accompanied with considerable anguish. "All that we can learn without anguish cramps us." [4]

[1] *Conf.* vii. 10.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. 1.
[3] *Ibid.* viii. 9.
[4] *Trésor des Humbles*, 164.

Hence in popular theology there is a kind of formal repudiation of this effort in its different forms, and the vivid realisation of the person of Jesus is advised instead. "For," as St John of the Cross says, "few are willing to endure even for this purpose the least spiritual solitude and mortification and to labour with firm patience."[1]

There is no fundamental difference between the apprehension of the religious ideal as Augustine describes it, and the apprehension of the poetic ideal. And not only the mind of the poet, but those also of the plastic artist and of the scientific discoverer, move towards their respective goals in an analogous manner, although with less self-consciousness. The introspective tendency of the religious thinker, however, makes him the most subtle and expressive interpreter of the common experience. And so the writings of the mystics generally serve as a key to forms of spiritual life which are not specifically religious. "It is one of the curiosities of Christian theology that a divine influence asserted by Scripture and believed by the early church to manifest itself in the successful conduct of civil offices and the fulness of intellectual learning should in these latter days be often set up in a sort of supernatural opposition to practical wisdom and the results of science."[2] Men are not moved, unless by a kind of self-devotion, to spend their energies

[1] *Living Flame of Love*, verse ii., line 5.

[2] G. A. Smith, *Isaiah* i. 188.

in the pursuit of truth scientific or historic, or again in creative production, social reform, or mechanical invention. To use Heine's phrase, they may be true knights of the Holy Spirit, and may help to build up Jerusalem in fulfilling their calling. There is an asceticism of the artist as well as of the contemplative saint; and he not less than others must gird himself up to carry out the divine vocation.

In some few instances—very few—the spirit of a great artist has broken the silence and has revealed the mode in which it has apprehended the truth. The masters contemporary with Socrates were dumb even to his questioning, but in one striking instance an artist has attempted to formulate his own theology, and we can see the truth after which Augustine reached, through the eyes of Blake. He prefaces the fourth chapter of *Jerusalem*, one of his strange prophetic books, with the following manifesto. His latest biographers suggest, that it will appear at first sight a great deal more mad than some of his writings.[1] I may say that they have made a serious mistake in transcribing the passage by writing "imminglement" for "entanglement." After some hesitation I have ventured to offer the reader an opportunity of judging for himself, since Blake's writings are not accessible to everybody. This passage offers in a compact form the interpretation not only of Blake's life and work,

[1] Ellis and Yeats, *Life*, i. 60.

but also of Ruskin's teaching,[1] and is really the counterpart of the quotation from Augustine. For there are two poles of Christian truth, the spiritual and the visible, and Blake's words may stand specially for the latter.

"To the Christians."

I give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball,
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate,
Built in Jerusalem's wall.

"We are told to abstain from fleshly desires that we may lose no time from the work of the Lord. Every moment lost is a moment that cannot be redeemed, every pleasure that intermingles with the duty of our station is a folly unredeemable, and is planted like the seed of a wildflower among our wheat.[2] All the tortures of repentance are tortures of self-reproach on account of our leaving the Divine Harvest to the enemy, the struggles of entanglement with incoherent roots. I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination—Imagination the real and Eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow, and in which we shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative bodies when these Vegetable mortal bodies are no more. The

[1] *Infra*, p. 63.

[2] Note the comparison of human life to the vegetable world throughout the quotation.

Apostles knew of no other Gospel. What were all their spiritual gifts? What is the Divine Spirit? Is the Holy Ghost any other than an intellectual Fountain?[1] What is the Harvest of the Gospel and its labours? What is the Talent which it is a curse to hide? What are the Treasures of Heaven which we are to lay up for ourselves? Are they any other than Mental Studies and performances? What are all the Gifts of the Gospel? Are they not all Mental Gifts? God is a Spirit who must be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth, and are not the Gifts of the Spirit Everything to Man. O ye Religious, discountenance everyone among you who shall pretend to despise Art and Science! I call upon you in the name of Jesus. What is the life of Man but Art and Science?[2] Is it Meat and Drink? Is not the Body more than Raiment. What is Mortality but the things relating to the Body that dies? What is Immortality but the things relating to the Spirit which lives eternally? What is the Joy of Heaven but improvement in the things of the Spirit? What are the pains of Hell but Ignorance, Bodily Lust, Idleness and devastation of the things of the Spirit? Answer this to yourselves, and expel from among you those who pretend to despise the labours of Art and Science, which alone are

[1] This is an exaggeration, but so is the opposite and popular view that religion is not on speaking terms with the intellect.

[2] Art and science are simply daily practice and common sense taken at their highest, *i.e.* their ideal meaning.

the labours of the Gospel. Is not this plain to the thought? Can you think at all and not pronounce heartily that to labour in knowledge is to build up Jerusalem, and to despise knowledge is to despise Jerusalem and her builders? . . . Let every Christian as much as in him lies engage himself openly and publicly before all the world in some Mental pursuit for the building up of Jerusalem!"

I do not think that it is hard to put a real and important meaning into this strange passage, and to read from it the secret of its author. He looks from the end of the eighteenth century into the future and anticipates the growth of positive knowledge and the development of the arts of life in which the century which is now closing has found its vocation. Immortality and Heaven are for Blake no things of time and space but of the spiritual world, a world which is to shine through the things of earth. Here, too, Blake anticipates, and the religious thought of the present finds him more congenial than the preachers of hell fire who scared his contemporaries.

The life of the man was greater than his utterance. For the great majority the world is a place of need and hardship. Blake was a living protest against the dull acquiescence in misery into which so many lives flicker out. Poverty has been praised from a safe distance by some religious-minded persons. Blake, like the apostles, adorned it. The noisy and impro-

vident wretchedness which is ever eager to plead poverty as its excuse receives a stern rebuke from this journeyman. His was a genuine poverty that frequently knew its last shilling, but it was never sordid. "Whatever was in Blake's house there was no squalor. Himself, his wife and his rooms were orderly and clean; everything was in its place. His delightful working corner had its implements ready—tempting to the hand. The millionaire's upholsterer can furnish no enrichments like those of Blake's enchanted rooms."[1]

Blake then is not only a prophet because he could read the true meaning of the age to come, but he helped to reveal the meaning of the present. He gave a poetic expression to the simple surroundings and opportunities of an English artisan, and did this with his verse and his drawings as well as in his life. The *Songs of Innocence* "are a valuable psychological document as establishing the possibility of a man of genius and of passion reaching thirty with the simplicity of a child. Hardly anything else in literature and art, unless some thought in Shakespeare, so powerfully conveys the impression of a pure elemental force, something absolutely spontaneous, innocent of all contact with, and all influence from, the refinements of culture. Even great artists and inspired poets suddenly confronted with such pure unassuming nature, may be supposed to feel as the disciples must have felt when the Master set the

[1] Palmer quoted; *Life* by Gilchrist, i. 306.

little child among them." [1] This is nearly right, but not quite. Blake seems to have read a good deal more than Dr Garnett assumes; and the simplicity attained by Blake was at the cost of considerable effort and self-criticism. Hence, although it is true that Blake remained to the end a mind of transparent simplicity, he displays also a most original, though often fantastic, genius for reflection. And reflection cannot work without material, such material as Blake found in his reading. Hence, he furnishes us with a considerable instance of the noble form of thought in which innocence and experience are reconciled.

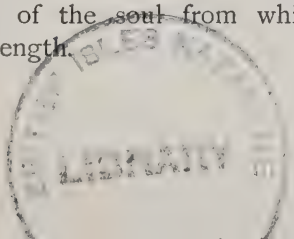
In his mind, however, thought took a visible form. His meaning seems to be divided between what he wrote and the drawings which he made to illustrate his writings. He lingers over the pathetic weakness of children and the gloom that gathers round old age spent amid the wretchedness of a great city; or contrasts the pittance upon which he could live the life of the spirit, and the futile expenditure in which the passing fashion is embalmed. For the most part, happily, he designs for its own sake. Forgetting the accidental circumstances of his age, he rises into the pure region of beauty, and returning to common day fixes forever what he has seen, in an occasional masterpiece.

Here then is the true mysticism of Blake, not in the strange hieroglyphics through which he

[1] Garnett, *William Blake, Painter and Poet*, 21.

chose to register his self-communings. In fact the symbolic system of which Messrs Ellis and Yeats have so much to say, proved a stumbling-block to him in his progress as an artist. For the student of Blake his symbolism must be like "the linen clothes folded up" of which he himself speaks, from which the spirit has broken forth.

Our study of Blake then will not be without profit if we can reach with its help a truer idea of what is meant by mysticism. It is that attitude of mind which divines and moves towards the spiritual in the common things of life. It is not a partial and occasional operation of the mind under the guidance of far-fetched analogies. At the same time, objects, and actions, trifling in themselves, which happen to coincide with some moment of tension, take on a character sublime or affecting, and thus the feelings gain a kind of conventional language, a symbolism. But if these symbols are separated from the feelings which give rise to them, they afford nothing more than at first a sense of mystery. And as their novelty wears away they disclose their emptiness to us as soon as we reflect upon them. Huysmans, for example, plays with the symbols of religious feeling in his *Cathedral.* But he rarely penetrates below the surface. He does not lead the reader to those great and primal forces of the soul from which devotion draws its strength.



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Nor again is mysticism to be identified with the seeing of visions, an experience which is nourished by the use of visible symbols. For when visible symbols are dwelt upon by persons who are highly strung, as in the acts of devotion performed before images or pictures, they react upon the mind in a manner to which hypnotic suggestion furnishes the necessary clue. In fact they are a means to a self-hypnotising. Nor is this confined to the use of religious pictures and sculpture; the artist or amateur may be taken captive by his familiar possessions until beautiful imagery lingers in his mind like a haunting refrain. Blake, unhappily, shut himself, of set purpose, from that repeated contact with nature which refreshes and recreates the fancy, and his mind turning in upon itself was slowly imprisoned in a round of gloomy and repellent forms.

Mysticism, then, is not specially associated with symbols and visions in which the senses find exercise. Just as little does it turn upon any imagined pre-eminence of discursive reasoning over sensation. "For although those things which are reached by reflection, being spiritual, are preferable to the corporeal things which are reached by sense, the preference is concerned with the objects themselves, of the higher, that is, over against the lower, not of reflection as compared with sense. For how should intellect be preferred to sense, by which it is informed in order to the knowledge of truths, inasmuch as the apostle writes to us, *for his in-*

visible things are discerned from the foundation of the world through the things which are made?"[1] "Spiritual things," says St John of the Cross, "transcend sense, but that is because they already include it."[2] The spiritual life is not degraded by having its roots in the life of sensible impression, but the latter is exalted by being taken up into the life of the spirit.

There is, then, no such intrinsic dignity in any partial operation of the soul that we can mark it off as nobler than another. This consideration seems to dispose of theories like that of Dr Martineau, which explain the supremacy of conscience by reference to a hierarchy of powers, of which the lower must obey the higher. Love, hope, faith, are not faculties or even operations of uniform types; they are modes in which the whole spirit relates itself to its object.

Hence we can no longer rest in the separation of the arts of expression from the religious life, to which the puritan spirit, in its extreme forms, is so prone. The very idea of the incarnation—the assumption of the human into the divine—is not realised unless human life is taken throughout the full range of its normal activities, and the reader who recalls the sense which we have agreed to put upon the term normal, will not underestimate the scope of this realisation. If, then, Blake had lived in those more genial times when religious ideas joined with other ideas in the

[1] Tertullian, *de anima*, 18. [2] *Living Flame of Love*, pref.

employment of all available talent both of painters and sculptors, we should not now have to deplore the fact that one of the very few supreme geniuses in this kind that our race has produced, should have run to waste. How Blake would have fared if he had been left entirely in the hands of his more unsympathetic contemporaries may be gathered from one circumstance. He left at his death an enormous pile of manuscripts of the same character as the extant prophetic books, and his widow placed them in the hands of an Angel of the Irvingite Church, Mr Frederick Tatham. Mr Tatham destroyed them in obedience to a mandate from his sect.[1]

Some may think that the likeness between the poetic and the religious life has been strained in this chapter. There is a suggestion with which we can close it, that will quite justify us in spending so much time over the mind of Blake. The artist invents his methods of working or takes them over from tradition. The great Italian schools will illustrate the latter fact : the career of Blake, and also of Turner, the former. On the whole, then, the artist has his own technique, his own way of doing things, and, therefore, no universal rules for the productions of genius can be laid down. It is the same with the art of living. No universal rules can be laid down for its higher flights, and so the psychology of the saints must be rather like a history of artists than the de-

[1] Ellis and Yeats, *Life*, i. 167. Garnett, 71.

scription of a single uniform type. Hence anecdotes which reveal, so to speak, the touch, the tact of a great soul, are more illuminating than a formal characterisation, and the anecdotes of which the gospels are mainly composed disclose the mind of the Master in a way which it baffles the imagination to better.

CHAPTER III

OVERSOUL

Hypothesis of Oversoul—Diversity of process with likeness of product at lower levels, diversity of both at higher levels, likeness of process at highest—Formal psychology adequate only at lowest level—Relation of highest process, or oversoul, to persons—Oversoul in national life and in the Church—Communicated by education—Doctrine of the spirit—Special manifestation in Christian love—Inspiration of thought and feeling—Prediction—Negative conditions—Range of the oversoul—Criticisms of Bradley and Ritschl.

THE principle of parsimony is of great importance in speculating about religion, namely, that we are to take our terms in the narrower sense when an alternative is offered. For the enthusiasm which directs itself upon religion is always on the watch for the opportunity to utter itself in an exaggerated way, and loses sight of the fact that religious truth rests upon a number of probabilities which support one another, and, in combination, are equivalent to an amount of certainty which they lack if we take them separately.

Hence the hypothesis of oversoul is to be understood at first with no further range of meaning than is necessary to hold together the facts which seem to suggest it. The cautious thinker will

naturally be on his guard against what looks like an attempt to introduce animism—the personification of functions—into psychology. At any rate the convention by which the psychologist has confined himself within the limits of a single mind, has freed contemporary thought from the mythology in which writers like Swedenborg and Tertullian have indulged.

A recent brilliant writer, Mr Mackail, in his *Latin Literature*, couples these two names as exponents of a romantic psychology.[1] I am too jealous of the epithet to let it pass unchallenged, for I think it may fairly be claimed for a psychology which is based upon the idea of the oversoul. The psychology of the oversoul is so far from personifying that its central hypothesis is introduced to explain personality, by subordinating it to something higher in which it is included, as the personages of a drama are determined by the action in which they take part. But when the powers of the mind are personified, as they are by Tertullian and Swedenborg and Blake, the soul becomes the arena of contending spirits, and so, instead of taking its own part in the divine drama of the world, it is paralysed within itself in self-contemplation. Hence there cannot possibly be a greater contrast than is presented by the method of Blake's prophetic books, on the one hand, in which the method of Swedenborg on its poetic side culminates, and the action and

[1] P. 254.

variety of a mediæval romance on the other. In the legend spiritual beings play their part in the world of reality, and share in its conflicts as vigorously as the gods in the Iliad. Nothing ever really happens in Blake's mystical writings. There is a panorama of names and words and forms, which have a meaning perhaps, but it is scarcely ever apparent. "The surface is perpetually, as it were, giving way before one and revealing another surface below it, and that again dissolves when we try to study it. The making of religions melts away into the making of the earth, and that fades away into some allegory of the rising and setting of the sun. It is all like a great cloud full of stars and shapes through which the eye seeks a boundary in vain."[1] His books are a revelation of his own soul, but they do not furnish, and should not be expected to furnish, the materials for a complete psychology. And what holds good of Blake holds good also of any other system of correspondences, such, for example, as that which Swedenborg employed. Symbols and correspondences are like solvents by which the stubborn differences of things are to be dissolved away.

I have no intention of burking the difficulties of thought by a myth, and shall try to give a quite positive meaning to the term oversoul. We have seen that the psychologist can deal upon universal lines only with a small part of ex-

[1] Ellis and Yeats, *Life*, i. 287.

perience, and that beyond this there is a region where the truly characteristic part of the individual life is to be sought. In the last chapter we tried to plumb the depths of two typical lives, and so considered some of the reasons for postulating a ground for this transcendental part of experience, if we may use so contradictory a phrase. We cannot remain content with unique events standing over against one another in isolation.

In the simpler processes of psychical life there is a likeness of product which tends to blind us to the underlying diversity of process. Perhaps after all the concepts of even simple objects have different meanings for each mind, a difference which is clear enough in its results upon practice. Consider, for instance, the meaning of the word "mountain" in the minds of a poet, a mining engineer, a shepherd, and a weary excursionist, as they pass over it. Already the technique of the soul is beginning to appear.

On the other hand, the unique character of our deeper experiences is not a mode of thought in which we can rest. We break away from the commonplace, the universal, in order to realise what is individual, personal to ourselves, but this second stage yields to a third. There is something beyond personality; the one process of which personality is like an aspect repeated at different centres.

Someone may object and say that this is

merely a play upon words. Let me ask a question. How are we to understand the existence over against one another of persons otherwise than by supposing a process upon which they depend? Of course it is open to anyone to assume that each person is, as such, self-existent, and that there is more than one self-existent being. This assumption is practically involved in nearly all contemporary psychology, and yet surely so important an assumption must be considered before it can be allowed to pass. But if we feel unable to conceive such a scheme of things, we are bound to define the world of persons within itself and in relation to its ground in a different way. Just as "nature" is a constitutive idea in which the separate atoms of physical experience are held together, so spirit or oversoul is an idea which we must postulate to account for the separate atoms of the psychical life. It may be asked why the notion of soul is not of this kind? The reply is near at hand. The life of the soul is an imperfect unity. And what we have postulated is a perfect unity, which therefore lies beyond the individual experience. Nor can we admit the suggestion that this imperfection of the individual soul can be remedied by taking a number of souls together. For the process which we are considering in its complete form would not then be accounted for. No combination of dependent beings can

account for one another. Hence the oversoul, or spirit, is a unity of process which does not find its centre in any individual. We are only carrying one stage further the thought of Spinoza. Just as "nature" is the name for the system of extended things, in which one attribute of God is revealed, so "spirit" may be understood as the name for the system of processes under which the attribute of thought is revealed. And I am so far from claiming any originality in the application of this idea of a system, that I will draw on one side to make room for the author of the most recent text-book of psychology, Dr Stout.

"The world of material phenomena presupposes a system of immaterial agency. In this immaterial system the individual consciousness originates. To it in some way the sensational experiences are due which form the basis of our knowledge of the material world. It is on it the individual consciousness acts when it produces changes in the material world. All this is possible because the system of immaterial agency is identical with what we know as matter in so far as matter exists independently of its possible presentation to a perceiving subject." (Whether it is right to use the term matter, after emptying it of its meaning in this way, is rather doubtful.) "This theory has purposely been stated in a vague form. There are varying views as to the nature of the system of

immaterial agency. Some say that it is will, others that it is absolute thought, others that it is unknowable; in any case the student should guard himself against the assumption that the immaterial system is a sort of repetition of the material system involving the same sort of interactions, and similar distinctions and relations of its parts. One thing seems clear, that we are nearer the truth in speaking of it as consciousness than in speaking of it as matter."[1]

Yet it seems better to mark this system off in some way from "consciousness," and that is why I prefer the term "oversoul."

Now we are not without clues to the character of this process which we have assumed. The soul, as it comes to unity in the depths of experience,[2] seems to become transparent and receptive of what we may call inspiration. *De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine.* And in the higher forms of inspiration—for there are lower forms too—the oversoul seems to express itself as it were in a relatively full self-consciousness.

We have seen that there are ranges of experience in which the formal psychologist is at home, and that there are other spheres to which his method seems inappropriate, and that it is possible to be conversant with one of the spheres, and not at the same time with another.[3] I now suggest that some of the Christian doctrines are really

[1] *Manual of Psychology*, 54. [2] *Cf.* p. 33, *supra*.
[3] P. 28, *supra*.

attempts to translate into definite expression these unexplored ranges of the life of the soul, namely, the doctrines of the Holy Spirit and inspiration, and of the communion of saints in the life of the Church. Our task then is, in part, to mark off these characters of the human spirit—treated as realised in the society and not simply in the individual—which have sought expression in these doctrines. We can regard Christian doctrines as so many attempts to cultivate and preserve certain forms of common life, and use them as an evidence of that life. At the same time we shall not be specially concerned whether our considerations are drawn from sources that are specifically religious. It is not the business of psychology to act as a theological watchdog, and we are bound to take account of the gropings, demands, movements of the soul, whether they are religiously valid or not.

We can trace the operations of the spirit, though with varying clearness, in the history of various races and nations, as well as in the history of those religious communities, which at first were identical with the nation, and finally in the more cosmopolitan religions. I have attempted elsewhere to show how in particular we can trace the operation of the Roman spirit.[1] And the reason why we shall dwell now especially upon the manifestation of the oversoul in the Christian Church is that we find there its richest and most concrete

[1] *Worship of the Romans*, c. i.

form. All profound theologians have affirmed that the spirit operates beyond the limits of the Church, and beyond those times in which the documents of the Church were composed. "Pusey holds the inspiration of the Church and of all good men, for example, Socrates, and, indeed, I never could find out," says Newman, "why Hooker is not to be called inspired."[1] Whenever, therefore, the soul aspires beyond the commonplace it shares in the life of the spirit. No bolts and bars, ecclesiastical or otherwise, can come between the meanest and weakest soul, and this august possibility, except in so far as they destroy the soul's power over itself. For the portals of the spiritual realm lie within the soul itself, and the unique character of the soul's higher experience precludes all immediate control of it from without. "This last prerogative is to be reserved to the supreme and all-embracing spirit."[2] There is, therefore, no necessary antagonism between humanism and Christian theology. There is even a "point of union where theology falls into its place as a branch of learning."[3] "The early Christian writers," says Professor Ramsay, "weary me sometimes with doctrine when I want humanity; but beneath their doctrine the man appears, and when they condescend to the affairs of the world they are full of human feeling. The greatest of them often reach the level of thought where

[1] *Letters*, i. 187. [2] St Bernard, *Sermon* V.
[3] Pattison, *Casaubon*, 251.

doctrine and life are fused as two aspects of the same thing."[1] It follows from this that education, so far as it introduces the developing mind to the things of the spirit, is performing a work which often reaches to the height of religion.

It is curious that Ritschl and his followers should limit the operation of the spirit upon the individual to the historical career of Jesus, and that in this way the extreme left should have joined hands with the obscurantists of the extreme right. But the theologian must take account of the operations of the spirit generally, or he must be content to be relegated with his works to the limbo specially assigned to still-born theological systems. Humanism has had to wait its time as against the sixteenth-century builders of spiritual prisons; but the river of events has carried the western nations away from the men who preferred to live amid enclosures and vaults, raised by themselves, overarching and crushing them like the walls and domes of Piranesi's *Carceri*. It is not surprising that the man who best interprets to us the age of ecclesiastical reform found such structures more stifling than those which they were meant to replace, in which after all he opened some windows. "He had been born with the hopes of the Renaissance with its anticipation of a new Augustan age, and had seen this fair

[1] *Church in Roman Empire*, 177.

promise blighted by the irruption of a new horde of theological polemics worse than the old scholastics, inasmuch as they were revolutionary instead of conservative. Erasmus never flouted at religion nor even against theology as such, but only at blind and intemperate theologians." He was not the less effective because he preferred not to break with the past. "His Greek Testament contributed more to the liberation of the human mind from the thraldom of the clergy than all the uproar and rage of Luther's many pamphlets."[1] Erasmus has this true mark of inspiration; he rose above the mere partisan. In him the spirit of his age was expressed, and with a freedom which reflects credit on the tolerance of the empire and the papacy. The master-spirit of the Reformation will get a hearing more and more now that the noisier voices in the theological tumult are being stilled. "Greater light and stronger judgment is usually with the reconcilers than with either of the contending parties."[2]

The spirit of Erasmus is embodied for England in the universities and public schools through which, not less than through professedly religious institutions, temperate orthodoxy is diffused through the leading currents of political and social life. On the other hand, the English artisan is more estranged from the religious life than ever, and with religion, the life of the spirit remains closed

[1] Pattison, *Erasmus*, in "Enc. Brit."

[2] R. Baxter in Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Biography*, v. 574.

to the great mass of our fellow-countrymen. The catastrophic forms of the religious life can only be required generally among those who have been the subjects of a vicious educational system. On the other hand, in the life of the universities and public schools, amid all the glaring imperfections of that life, the benign influences of the spirit steal gently in and sink none the less deeply because they are almost unheeded. Between these two types of the religious life, that which attempts by spasmodic and interrupted effort to compensate for the continued and pervasive blasphemy of the spirit, and, on the other hand, that which pays daily even an unconscious homage, there can be no hesitation on the part of those who seek permanence and stability in national character. "The austere sects," Joubert says, "excite the most enthusiasm at first, but the temperate sects have always been the most durable." And that is why the temper of Erasmus is after all a better vestibule to the kingdom of the spirit than the temper of the extreme reformers.

One more word on this topic: the very resentment with which, perhaps, these lines will be read by some is its own condemnation. How blasphemous, they will say, to compare education with the special means of grace! Yet, for all that, it is only when the office of the teacher is animated by an ideal as lofty as is implied by this comparison, that his true functions can be maintained against those who, at this time, are endeavouring

to reduce education to a preparation for business, and nothing more. Jerusalem, as Blake finely says, has to be built in England, and this building depends more upon the spirit which governs education than upon anything else.

Yet, after all, education is only the vestibule to the religious life, and it is not less than that. But we shall now pass through the porch into the temple, and study the more vivid manifestation of the spirit within the Church. The consciousness of the Church has sought to express itself in the doctrine of the spirit as opposed to soul and body; of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the common life; and of the Church regarded as the mystical body of Christ.

And first as to the spirit manifested in the life of the individual. There is no doubt that in the Christian Church, and under its influence, the individual has come to a far more vivid self-consciousness than in the city state of the ancient world. For patristic psychology, "the most important thing in the world is the presence of a multitude of individual souls."[1] It is, therefore, by a logical necessity that the doctrine of the oversoul, or spirit, has been elaborated by Christian theology. There are some phases of the Christian experience, particularly those which accompany what is called inspiration, that baffle the ordinary analysis of the operations of the mind. When we interpret the idea of the Godhead into its implica-

[1] Siebeck, *History of Psychology*, I. ii. 358.

tions, we shall, as psychologists, be able to agree with the definition of the spirit as that by which men are capable of union with God. Just as the oversoul is identical with itself, even in all those who share in it, so it is not always possible to distinguish in religious phraseology between what is said of the one spirit and of the spirit as manifested in individuals. This relation of the individual soul to the oversoul seems to illustrate, and to be illustrated by, the doctrine of the Trinity. "The true unity of believers, like the Unity of Persons in the Holy Trinity, is offered as something far more than a mere moral unity of purpose, feeling, affection; it is in some mysterious mode which we cannot apprehend, a vital unity. In this sense it is the symbol of a higher type of life, in which each constituent being is a conscious element in the being of a vast whole. In 'the life' and in 'the life' only, each individual life is able to attain to perfection."[1] This view, which is obviously of the same kind with the theory of Emerson, explains also the realisation of immortality in the present life. In the spirit, distinctions of number and time seem to be irrelevant. That is why the doctrine of the Trinity, which attempts to transcend numerical distinctions, is really a more philosophic view than the assumption of an unbroken unity. And along with the notion of number, that of time must go. The spirit is eternal, not as opposed to, but as transcending time.

[1] Westcott on *St John* xvii. 21.

Hence anyone who rises to the life of the spirit is already in the enjoyment of an eternal life. And further, through the notion of a process in which the individual is not so much lost, as realised in something higher, the belief in the immortality of the individual becomes rational.

The entrance upon the life of the spirit is also the foundation of the spiritual congregation; "If we walk in the light, we have communion with one another." Although it is not necessary, indeed, that the oversoul should enfold a man through the forms of religious institutions, these are, perhaps, the most efficient means. The most powerful impulse to the life of the spirit is that of religious love; what education and discipline does slowly, painfully and doubtfully in fitting the soul for the common life, is often done at a single stride by the fiery enthusiasm of religious passion, and the victims of inverted education and fatal opportunities are wrenched in an instant from the habits of one or even two decades, and become most valuable ministers of the common needs. Yet it is a mistake to regard the relation between the light of the oversoul and the communion in which it is realised as reciprocal. The Church offers its communion as a means to that light, but when it is most true to itself it does not claim to be the sole possessor of the light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

Yet there is a unique and all-important office which the Church, and nothing else, performs in

the world. There is in the Church an attitude towards the touchstones of experience which is found nowhere else, an emotional temper which Paul compares to a cement holding the community together. "All the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth according to the working of the measure in every several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love."

The unity of the oversoul, as of the individual soul, is thus something which is not immediately given in the life of the society, but something which has to be striven after, as well as received. This unity is realised in a comparatively superficial manner in the common life of citizens, realised partially in the whole body of scientific apprehension, and most deeply in the common life of the Church. One and the same group of experiences is concerned, therefore, though in varying modes, in the doctrines of the spirit in man, of the Holy Spirit, and of the mystical body of Christ. These doctrines, therefore, have a value for the psychologist, in that they point at certain psychical conditions to which adequate attention has not been given elsewhere. And, on the other hand, the theologian, who wishes to realise the meaning of these doctrines, will tend to express himself in a strictly psychological manner. "I have conceived," Ritschl says, "of the Holy Spirit as the ground of the common

consciousness of divine sonship, as the motive and the divine power of the supramundane religious and moral life in the community, and so as the necessary formal determination of the Christian personality."[1] If we give these thoughts of Ritschl the wider scope which they really demand, but which he so strangely refused them, they are almost equivalent to the thoughts with which we have just been occupied.

Now that we have thus roughly determined the range and conditions of the oversoul, let us consider for a moment how it is revealed in inspiration. It is perhaps impossible to avoid anticipating to some extent what will be said about inspiration in a later chapter. Now, however, we shall consider it in regard to its source; afterwards in relation to the mind of the prophet.

Inspiration is of more than one kind; over against that of the judgment through which objective truth seems to dawn upon the soul is the not less real inspiration of the feelings through which the soul awakes to self-sacrifice and love.

Let us consider first the inspiration of the judgment. The seer and poet always speak of truth as given to them, a phrase which we may compare with the use of the term *given* to denote the as yet unorganised volume of sense impressions. And although the psychologist may discern by retrospective analysis the pos-

[1] *Theologie u. Metaphysik*, 45.

sible modes in which such truth might have been attained step by step, this possibility, as Mill observed, does not justify us in contradicting the account which genius gives of its own workings. Milton, for example, claimed in all seriousness to be the mouthpiece of "that Eternal spirit who can enrich with all utterance and all wisdom"; and in many other places he speaks of the light that breaks in upon the soul when it becomes transparent to such divine effluences. The convention, then,—which turns out to be more than a convention—by which we speak of the inspiration of the true poet, is tested when we extend the phrase to artists, workers and inventors, in whatever kind. And yet it has to be so extended or abandoned altogether. Ruskin, who by the way has clothed in a more beautiful and orderly frame the soul of Blake's teaching, uses the word inspiration after this manner,[1] "not carelessly nor lightly, but in all logical calmness and perfect reverence." The inspiration of the Jewish prophets is, therefore, to be compared and partly identified with these other instances. "The possession of a single true thought about Jehovah, not derived from current religious teaching, but springing up in the soul as a word from Jehovah, is enough to constitute a prophet."[2] And so it turns out that the ideas of Blake, which perhaps the reader was inclined to scout as extrava-

[1] *Modern Painters*, iii. 147.
[2] Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, 182.

gant, are very near sober fact, and follow for the most part in a direct manner from the idea of God. "There is none beside Thee," says St Augustine, "who is the teacher of truth whereso-ever and whencesoever it may have shone." [1]

Over against the inspiration of the judgment is that of the feelings. It is a special office of the Christian revelation to insist upon the claims of the affections. Let us now consider some of the grounds upon which this claim is justified. We have seen that in a favourable environment,[2] gracious influences steal in upon the soul and insensibly mould it towards a divine harmony, but that where these influences are lacking the soul becomes encased in a network, through which it can only break by a supreme effort, some deep stirring of the springs of life. And this same effort of the will brings the soul to God, as well as the slow and insensible movings of a quieter experience. But the feelings which the Christian religion seeks to develop are not undetermined. It is too often thought that any kind of excite-ment is religious in character, provided that it be associated with certain forms of ritual, or again of expression. This is far from being the case. I do not know how this emotional temper can be better described than as the character of Jesus, interpreted by the imitation of the noblest of His followers, whether professed or not. These efforts at imitation are, in turn, not less remarkable in

[1] *Conf.* v. 6.

[2] P. 57.

themselves and in their effects than other instances of inspired imagination and skill. There is an originality of the heart not less than of the invention, and of the two the former has much the greater power over the mass of mankind. The prophet is a nobler figure than one who is a priest and nothing more; but nobler than either stands the man who, out of unfeigned love towards his fellow-men, shares in their burdens, like Francis of Assisi or Vincent de Paul. Only a one-sided psychology will depreciate the originality of men like these. And yet here too the originality is not assumed by the possessor of the feeling; *not unto us*, *not unto us*, they cry in the same accents as those of Milton. Now this is a very interesting and important parallel, and from another quarter strengthens the grounds for belief in the oversoul, or, in more familiar language, the one spirit.

Let us note in the next place that the inspiration of feeling is connected with an intuitive foreboding of the future. Here we must distinguish between the feelings that are called up mechanically as by the objects and acts of devotion, and those feelings which, welling up from the depths of the heart, bear the token of true inspiration. Such feelings are indeed "the powers of the age to come." They are a clue to the future which they will tend to control. Even when they seem to cling to the past they have this warrant; that the momentary present is only a partial criticism of the past, and that as against the present, the

whole past is usually of greater value. The veils of the divine are removed only at intervals ; and when the sanctuary is closed, recollection takes the place of the prophet. The hidden life is one day to be disclosed again.

The spiritual interpretation of history consists simply in applying the idea of the oversoul, in reading the course of events as acts in a great world drama. We shall look, therefore, for the manifestations of the oversoul, not in the disturbances of the order of nature, but in its characteristic functions. As we proceed, we shall find that much of what seems extraordinary in the religious life is perfectly normal, and that the notion of the miraculous has been applied far too hastily in explaining the life of the soul. The messengers, "angels," of the oversoul are not necessarily visible any more than the spirits in *Manfred*. "The angelology of the Old Testament deals with functions, operations, and not persons."[1] And so the prophetic character of the Old Testament turns not so much upon any quality in the events therein recorded, as in the temper of mind in which they were regarded, a temper which can be gained, as through a sort of contagion, by those who immerse themselves in its perusal.

Let us, in conclusion, deal with one or two objections.

Several thinkers deny the likelihood of communion in a direct manner, whether between one

[1] G. A. Smith, *Minor Prophets*, ii. 311.

soul and another, as Mr Bradley does, or between the soul and God, as Ritschl does. These two objections point to the two aspects of the oversoul which seem to be manifested in the religious experience. On the one hand, souls find not only their ground, but their unity and communion within the oversoul, and on the other there seems to be a special disclosure of the oversoul in inspiration. "A direct communication between souls we cannot say is impossible," Mr Bradley declares;[1] but on the other hand he finds no good reason for supposing it to exist. Not only does this hypothesis fail to commend itself to Mr Bradley's judgment, it also disappoints his taste. "The possibility seems in addition to be devoid of all interest." Perhaps these objections are not directed against the conclusions to which we have been tending. For us it is sufficient if the communion of soul with soul is made possible through the system in which all souls are held together. And I think that we can draw a most important distinction here between the ideas current among "spiritualists," and those of the Christian belief. The spiritualist seems to think that one soul can directly communicate with another, as when a "medium" is possessed by a "control." The communion of souls in theology has another meaning, and is referred to the spirit. The direct action of soul upon soul, which Mr Bradley seems to have in view, is that of the "control" as it

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, 343.

affects the "medium." Perhaps we may put the matter in this way: Mr Bradley, like Mr Spencer, seems to hold that all communication of souls is indirect, and is mediated by inference from the physical expression of the soul's life. But surely *if* we hold that physical and psychical events are disparate, the physical events which intervene between an utterance by one soul and its apprehension by another, cannot be more than the occasion of that apprehension; the ground of it must be sought elsewhere. This thought is carried further in the quotation from Dr Stout's *Manual*.[1]

Again, the theory of the oversoul is not really touched by another objection of Mr Bradley. "The sameness of souls," he says, "is a fact. The identity of their content is just as real as their separate existence. But this identity need not imply any further relation between them. It need not, so far as we can see, act in any way; and its action where it acts appears to be indirect. Souls seem to influence one another only by means of their bodies." Mr Bradley seems to exaggerate the importance of the identity of content which is, as we have seen, exceedingly limited, at least in the simpler experiences. What is important, however, is not so much identity of content as of process.[2] But perhaps Mr Bradley will not let such terms pass unchallenged. I wanted to say presentative *activity*. But then it is "a scandal" even to use this word.[3] I looked therefore through

[1] P. 52. [2] P. 49. [3] *Op. cit.*, 63.

the index of *Appearance and Reality* to see whether I could avoid offending Mr Bradley in any way; but, if we may judge by the index of his book, nothing ever really happens in his philosophy, any more than in the prophetic books of Blake, and all that the real can do is to *appear*. However, I have done what I could in order to confine myself within the limits laid down for me, and would distinguish merely between one and the same content, and the mode of its appearance at different centres, for it is not so much identity of content, as of process that concerns us. And, since this identity of process is only attained "the higher we mount from the facts of sense,"[1] there seems reason for seeking in that quarter especially, conditions of the communion of souls. That is to say, the point at which identity of process seems to be realised by different souls, is the furthest away from the range within which—to use Mr Bradley's phrase—"souls influence one another by means of their bodies."

But if an individualist psychology is a contradiction, as we have seen reason to hold, we find ourselves drawing the conclusions to which we are committed, even on the principles of Mr Bradley. "All psychology in its practice is compelled to admit the working power of identity."[2] And again he says: "In the course of the soul's internal history, we must admit that the sameness of

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, 345. [2] *Op. cit.*, 355

its states is an actual mover."[1] We are bound to extend the interpretation of identity which is thus affirmed for the individual soul, to groups of souls. The identity of feeling, of aspiration, of judgment, is a mover. In other words, the communion of souls is something more than a mere similarity.

Another criticism of the same writer is met by the theory of the oversoul. "Most of those," we are assured, "who insist on what they call the personality of God, are intellectually dishonest. They desire one thing, and to reach it they argue for another. . . . The Deity which they want is of course finite, a person much like themselves, with thoughts and feelings limited and mutable in the process of time. They desire a person in the sense of a self, amongst and over against other selves, moved by personal relation and feelings towards these others—feelings and relations which are altered by the conduct of the others."[2] I am not aware of any considerable theologians against whom Mr Bradley's accusation holds. The communion of the soul with God is not as of one self with another, but as of the soul coming to its true self in the spirit; God being, in the words of Augustine, "the life of life."[3] By denying the communion of souls, Mr Bradley destroys inevitably the other parts of the theological system.

Let us now consider for a moment the objections directed by Ritschl and his school against the mystical union of the soul with God. We will

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, 353. [2] *Op. cit.*, 532. [3] *Conf.* x. 6.

consider these objections in the form of the conclusion to which they are supposed to lead, namely, that the union of the soul with God, or of Jesus with God, is simply a union of intention. But to speak in this way is really to touch upon the deeps of the soul. Nothing can be more profound than the harmony which has for its centre the springs of conduct. In fact the notion of a oneness of will is simply the explicit form of the thought that is implicit in the mystical union. Hence the sincere use of the third petition in the Lord's Prayer has a mystical meaning, or, to express this better, aspiration cannot go beyond this petition.

Lastly, the individual comes to his full rights in the oversoul. There is no conflict between the oversoul and the characteristic qualities of genius. In fact the special character of genius is guarded against the ridiculous method of Lombroso by marking off the "normal" from the "average," and also from the "morbid"; a task which beforehand would seem rather superfluous. In the complex human personality, the community of feeling, etc., in the oversoul, accompanies the flowering of supreme genius. Homer and Shakespeare and Goethe are at once the most unique and the most universal of minds. They fulfil their office in the revelation of the human spirit by reflecting the true meaning of that revelation to the utmost. And this is precisely what the average mind cannot do: *l'homme sensuel moyen* might indeed be described as the precise negation of the oversoul.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOUL'S AWAKENING

Complexity of process—Diversity and modesty—The possibility of instantaneous conversion—Relation to final perseverance—Conversion as instantaneous change of motive—As causing the introspective habit—And so self-torment—Effect on doctrine—Shrinking from ridicule—Humour—Introspection and preaching—Development of introspection—Search for consistency—Clarification of feeling—Faith and experience—Sin.

THE soul, as it develops, enters into fresh relations with the oversoul. A more or less complete terminology has been given to one particular stage in this development, that, namely, in which the soul first becomes conscious of its relation to the oversoul. The new birth, conversion, reconciliation, justification, election, all denote rather aspects of a process than a complete experience. They are an instance, further, of a principle on which stress has been laid ; that there is a difference of form as well as of content in different experiences. The development of the soul takes place in such a way that no single description of any stage—or at least of any later stage—in that development, can apply to all persons. It is lamentable to think how many commentaries have been vainly composed upon

the letters of St Paul, for lack of remembering the simple and obvious fact that the religious life which he described was the one he knew, namely, his own ; and that only, by a strange coincidence, can it tally to any considerable extent with the religious life of another man.

Many instances suggest themselves which show the serious consequences which follow for the spiritual life, from the assumption that we can enter upon it only in one way. The discipline of the Jesuit novice is avowedly intended to stifle individual character and leave in its place the passive obedience of an instrument. Hence we can understand why one and the same course is imposed upon all. But although this discipline is wonderfully adapted to the purpose for which it is designed, it seems to have contributed to the curious mediocrity above which the members of the society have so rarely risen, and below which they have not often fallen. The Society of Jesus has been wonderfully prolific in minds of the second rank, but it has fallen short, with a few rare exceptions, of the breath of genius—that gust of the spirit that only blows where the air is free.

So also in a very different quarter, a uniform plan of salvation has been imposed upon thousands of persons by the later exponents of the evangelical revival, who have been unconscious that what they called the plan of salvation was simply the reduction of St Paul's experience to

a mechanical formula. Newman says of himself: "The evangelical teaching, considered as a system and in what was peculiar to itself, had from the first failed to find a response in his religious experience, as afterwards in his parochial. He had indeed been converted by it to a spiritual life, and so far his experience bore witness to its truth; but he had not been converted in that special way which it laid down as imperative."[1] Nor need anyone be surprised that this was so. In proportion as the soul becomes more truly conscious of itself in the religious life, it will also regard itself as standing in its own private relation to the spirit. And when a stranger intrudes upon these furthest recesses, he is often guilty of a serious injury. For there is a modesty of the soul, as well as of the body, through which high-spirited persons usually shrink from talking about the principles of honour upon which they act. This is why the intrusion even of well-meaning persons in the things of the spirit is so often bitterly resented. The religious life, in its private aspect, is indeed a mystery and forbids speech, and when this reticence is transgressed the soul seems to be wounded. Dale, speaking of hypnotic experiments, says: "I have come to the conclusion that when a man submits himself to experiment, he surrenders for the time the integrity of his self-command, allows a break to be made in the fences which protect

[1] *Letters*, i. 108.

his personality, runs grave risk of madness or worse. If I may put it so there seems to me to be a sacrifice of the chastity of our inner personal life in these inquiries, which may have results on the higher nature analogous to those which follow the physical offence and still more ruinous."[1] I think this is one of the reasons why sometimes there is a look upon the countenance of some very devout persons as though they had been whipped publicly. The soul is sometimes laid bare, as it were, in devotional offices, and is at the mercy of another. In his story, *The Flag of their Country*, Rudyard Kipling reads a much needed lesson to those persons whose enthusiasm makes them forget the dignity which hedges round even the commonest soul, and who are eager to mouth and to paw even in the holy of holies.

Now there are scarcely any minds that have been subjected to profanation like that of which I am speaking, without suffering some loss of insight and power. The spirit does not entrust its deeper inspirations unless to those who can guard them. It refuses, therefore, to recognise any plan of salvation and comes and goes at its own sovereign pleasure. Hence it often happens that the inner life of one who in the eyes of his fellows is a moral wreck, is, in the eyes of a higher intelligence, a garden of beauty, just because such an one has kept the inmost sanctuary unprofaned. For it is not every sinful act that of necessity

[1] *Life*, p. 651.

affects the depth of the soul. "In my younger days," says Baxter, "my trouble for sin was most about my actual failings in thought, word, or action. . . . But now I am much more troubled for inward defects and omissions, or want of the vital duties or graces in the soul."[1] There can be no doubt here of the opinion of Jesus. He found more congenial companionship amid the outcasts of Jewish society than among the professedly religious; and seems to have compared the Pharisees to whited sepulchres by contrast with those whose outward life belied their true nobility of spirit.

Now there are large classes of persons who exhibit a special susceptibility to suggestion, and particularly amid the excitement which is aimed at in some forms of religious assemblies. At such times they exhibit many of the symptoms which are found in hypnotic seizures, and while they are open then to religious impressions in a distinctly morbid manner, they are also often carried away by impressions of a less wholesome kind. It is impossible to read the accounts of what takes place at religious revivals without thinking of these parallels drawn from medical pathology.

And yet, strangely enough, there is a widespread tendency to identify the universal manner by which the soul rises for the first time into the life of the spirit, with this the least spiritual

[1] Wordsworth, *Ecclesiastical Biography*, v. 570.

manner of all. At such times man begins to draw nearer to the centre of things ; to truth, peace, goodness. And although in some cases an overpowering external suggestion wrenches the soul from its old course into the new, it is comparatively rare for the motives to be so suddenly altered. Moreover, so far is instantaneous conversion from being the only true type of the approach to God, that it is but the extreme form of one type among several. Conversion is, in its essence, a change of intention ; and this may be directed either upon intellectual or upon moral objects. There is also an analogous process by which the soul attains rest through the slow clarification of the feelings. Hence we must hesitate before we accept any cut and dried theory of conversion, like that which is based upon the dramatic experience of St Paul on the way to Damascus. There is the highest authority for saying that the road to the kingdom of the spirit is neither easy to find nor easy to tread. The journey has to be made from each of the four winds. Hence, although the way of life is marked off as difficult and narrow, if we compare it with the broad and easy way of custom and inclination, it is not of one monotonous character. "For as there are many mansions in heaven, so also there are many roads leading thither. Some persons advance by considering themselves in hell," St Teresa says (here the method of the old-fashioned revivalist preacher is laid down),

"others, in heaven, and these are distressed by meditations on hell." (Here the saint prophesies the shrinking of the present generation from eternal punishment. As the American elder said to the new minister, "It is no good preaching eternal punishment to our people; they won't stand it.") "Others meditate on death." (Think of our grandmothers reading Drelincourt on *Death*, Blair's *Grave*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs*!) "Some persons if tender-hearted are greatly fatigued by meditations on the Passion" (the Teutonic nature shrinks from the stations of the cross with their vivid portrayal of the sufferings of Jesus), "but are consoled and make progress when they meditate upon the power and greatness of God in His creatures and on His love visible in all things." (Here is the breezy and somewhat superficial optimism of Channing and the American Unitarians.)[1]

Let us consider for a moment why conversion should be associated so often with a definite and instantaneous change of motive, a change which can be produced by religious excitement working upon certain temperaments. In the first place, there is a delusive simplicity in such cases. For the springs of conduct are veiled in clouds and darkness, and are infinitely less accessible to observation than is assumed by some popular beliefs. It is only possible to mark off a change

[1] *Life*, xiii. 20.

in the soul by taking a superficial view and fixing the moment by an outward act. We need not be surprised then that this way of beginning the religious life by an instantaneous change of motive should be seized upon as typical to the exclusion of others which in reality are not less valid. Nor again is it surprising that the English character with its strong practical bent, should lay special stress upon the change of motive, and that it should be impatient with minds like that of Newman in their search for consistency ; or that it should be so incredulous about the emotional experiences upon which mystical writers love to dwell. And, in the third place, the belief in instantaneous conversion is tempting for a further reason. It dispenses with any need for systematic explanation. When the change of motive has once taken place, the life of the soul is thought to admit of no further description, as though from earth to heaven were just one step.

A popular preacher not so very long ago went up into the North of Scotland to conduct a mission, and his experience there brings out very well the relation that holds between the professional standpoint of the pulpit and the beginnings of the spiritual life. He complained amongst other things that " in the North they could soak up a great amount of preaching and make no sign." I suppose the scientific phrase would be that they were supersaturated. " One of the great

difficulties there too was instantaneous conversion. Somehow they did not want a sudden change." A woman rebuked him by saying that her mother had been praying in the hills for five years before she was converted: how was she to be converted in five minutes? Think of those lonely years amid the mountains and lochs, where the Celtic imagination traces its legends of love and death, and then think of the bustling gentleman from the south offering to furnish salvation complete within five minutes! In the religious life each event, each experience, is to be taken as a fresh revelation, and no single event or experience is to be allowed to dominate the whole after life in such a way as to obscure the special meaning of each moment. In this sense, and in the religious life above all, "to form habits is to fail."

The belief in instantaneous conversion holds very closely with the belief in final perseverance, and the connection between these two ideas is interesting to the psychologist. If the soul is specifically determined by the single act of conversion, it will retain this bent toward the end. But, fortunately, the infinite variety of the soul's life rises above these cramping bonds. No single act of the soul can so mortgage its whole after course in such a manner as to shut off altogether the possibility of a free choice. "*I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me.*" Cardinal Manning shortly before his death expressed himself as feeling some doubts about the

destiny of his own soul, and in consequence has been much criticised by those who fail to realise to themselves the tragedy of human conduct. As a matter of fact, to use Ritschl's words, "the craving after assurance leads to an artificial tension of sentiment with interruptions by moments of despair or with the risk of lasting self-deception." [1] Nearly every page of *Grace Abounding* justifies these words of Ritschl.

In truth these two ideas, namely, of instantaneous conversion and of final perseverance, contain within themselves a contradiction. The life of the spirit cannot be expressed in the terms of time, and in proportion as it is more deeply realised, the ideas of time fall away.

So long as the direction of the soul towards God is viewed in an external way, such as that which we have been considering, it is possible to pass through many experiences without a deepened self-knowledge. And yet even in the simplest mode of approach to the truth, there is also a revelation of self. "For what is it," asks St Augustine, "to hear from Thee about oneself but to come to know oneself?" Genuine religious feeling then and increased self-knowledge go side by side. But in certain modes of the religious experience introspection plays a greater part. There are some minds which are impelled towards introspection, and it is to them that we

[1] *History of Christian Doctrines of Justification and Reconciliation*, p. 287.

owe the striking self-revelations in which we can best read the religious spirit. The very emphasis or exaggeration into which religious minds often fall, magnifies and brings to light the subtler aspects of life. The soul is set over against God in an awful isolation, like the two actors in a drama of Æschylus, and this idea colours even the simple conditions of life until they merge into a tragic gloom and lurid intensity. "I thought," says Bunyan in one of his melancholy moods, "that all things wrought for my damage and for my eternal overthrow."[1] And again, "Methought this sin was bigger than the sins of a country, of a kingdom, or of the whole world; no one pardonable, nor all of them together was able to equal mine, mine outwent them every one."[2] Of course there is exaggeration here, and historical truth cannot accept these statements literally. But if we read them as the expression of deep feeling the case is altered and they have a genuine meaning.

At such times of storm and stress, the soul sees objects in a distorted perspective, and is aware of this, its weakness. "These things," said Bunyan, "may seem ridiculous to others, even as ridiculous as they were in themselves, but to me they were the most tormenting cogitations."[3] This self-tormenting is one of the most characteristic features of the religious life, although it often passes its normal limits and becomes morbid.

[1] *Grace Abounding*, par. 157. [2] *Ib.*, par. 172. [3] *Ib.*, par. 184.

When, in the act of reflection, moral standards are for the first time consciously applied by a man to his own character, he tends to become alarmed by the persistence of habits of thought and desire which have become part of his nature, and, on the other hand, to watch with anxiety each act which may both reveal himself and further determine himself. "I durst not take a pin or a stick," said Bunyan, "though but so big as a straw, for my conscience now was sore, and would smart at every touch: I could not now tell how to speak my words for fear I should misplace them. Oh, how gingerly did I then go in all I did or said. I found myself as on a miry bog that shook if I did but stir.[1] . . . But my original and inward pollution—that was my plague and affliction—that I saw at a dreadful rate always putting itself forth within me; that I had the guilt of to amazement; by reason of that I was more loathsome in mine own eyes than was a toad, and I thought I was so in God's eyes too. 'Sin and corruption,' I said, 'would as naturally bubble out of my heart as water would bubble out of a fountain.'" He was racked as on a wheel in this way for years. Now there can be no doubt that these growing scruples have a most important function to play in the moral life of the society. The struggles of the soul are not merely, as it were, a freak or a sport, but have a universal meaning. No mere

[1] *Grace Abounding*, par. 82.

calm process of self-examination can take the place of the self-torment of which Bunyan speaks. Mere self-examination without the accompanying effort is like putting a diseased tissue under the microscope without seeking a cure. There is in St Augustine an utterance like Bunyan's. "No one is clean from sin in Thy sight, not even an infant whose life upon the earth has been of one day."[1] The awakened and therefore oversensitive conscience confuses the degrees of wrong. The bawling of the newborn child and the theft of some fruit by the lad of sixteen, are solemnly condemned by the saint, who was after all a repentant rake. It is an ironical comment upon these self-revelations of Augustine that they have found expression in the creed of Calvin and his followers in the belief that beings morally innocent are tortured eternally. Perhaps, however, as Bunyan says, there is a necessary absurdity about the exaggerations into which human beings fall at certain crises. But religious teachers who lack the sense of humour perpetuate for the amusement, edification or perplexity of others, those extravagances which wiser men like Bunyan estimate at their true value. There is a saving cynicism which is found in the most saintly persons, and is, in its due place, a safeguard against exaggeration. He who penned the picture of Vanity Fair,[2] and Santa Teresa when she spoke of "the badly arranged comedy of this life," are at one with Him

[1] *Conf.* ii. 6.

[2] I do not mean the novel.

who compared His divine mission to the cry of a child among children playing in the market-place. The theologian who shrinks from the touch of nature runs the risk of being alienated from his kind, and, for the time being, from his own true self.

I am aware that flippancy has its dangers, but, after all, in a world where there is so much to be serious about, there can scarcely be too many merry people. And so it is pleasing to come across their delightful footsteps in somewhat solemn surroundings. Let us try to catch a glimpse of the muse of comedy, as she haunts even the sacred precincts. George Fox on one occasion gravely censures those who held that "women have no souls" (adding in a light manner) "no more than a goose." "But I reproved them, and told them that was not right."[1] I believe that the latter-day saints hold something to the same effect. On other occasions Fox fell foul of rhyme-makers and fiddlers. And this was when Milton was writing the words for the music of Henry Lawes in the more serious days before the restoration and the license of Charles the Second! Human nature has a habit of shaking itself loose from those shackles which formalists would put upon it. Donne, in a rash moment, made a promise (which he failed to keep) that he would not write any verses after taking orders, as though religion and the muses could not agree. I am sure no one will be very hard upon poor Donne for his un-

[1] *Journal* for 1646.

doubted breach of faith to the Lady Bedford, who exacted his foolish vow. And, to descend to physical as well as moral frailty, those who have suffered from the close air of some places of worship, will sympathise with another child of nature —his name is, unfortunately, not handed down. Wesley was preaching at Bath, Monday, January 24th, 1743. "Some of the rich and great were present. One of them, my Lord ——, stayed very patiently till I came to the middle of the fourth head. Then starting up he said: 'Tis hot, 'tis very hot,' and got downstairs as fast as he could."[1] I am inclined to think that Wesley, unlike Fox, could relish the details in which human weakness is shown and dragged down from its pedestal. The great reformers in religion, St Francis, Luther, Wesley, have been touched with a humanism which is libelled by the rigidity of some of their followers. Wesley could enjoy seeing the Westminster scholars act the *Adelphi* of Terence. Or again with comic power he depicts in a sentence his grandfather Annesley. "He lived seventy-seven years, and would probably have lived longer had he not began water-drinking at seventy."[2] And let no one say these trifles are unworthy of the dignity of religion. The man who is sensible of them will be saved from too high a conceit of himself, and from the mistakes into which serious persons often fall. The shafts of ridicule fall harmless from a humorous coat of mail. Nowhere is this self-criticism more required

[1] Wesley's *Journals*, 1743. [2] *Ib.*, 1768, 1769.

than in the attempt to gain over others to the opinions and beliefs which have taken strong possession of the soul. Poor Fox sets out bravely "to bring off people from all the world's religions which are vain."[1] St Teresa could have advised him. "When people," says she, "begin to have pleasure in the rest and fruit of prayer, they will have everybody else be very spiritual also. Now, to desire this is not wrong, but to try to bring it about may not be right, except with great discretion and with much reserve, without any appearance of teaching."[2]

And this brings us back to the point at which we arrived some time since. The man who is to deal successfully with the souls of others, must first understand his own. "For it is one grace that our Lord gives grace; and it is another grace to understand what grace, and what gift it is; and it is another and further grace to have the power to describe and explain it to others."[3] One of the reasons why the pulpit is not more effective is that the revelation of the soul to itself is undertaken, for the most part, by men who, not knowing their own hearts, presume to depict the inner life of others. "'Tis not all our understanding has to do, simply to judge us by our outward actions; it must penetrate the very soul, and there discover by what springs the motion is guided. But that being a very high and hazardous undertaking, I could wish that fewer would attempt it."[4]

[1] Fox, *Journal*, i. 648.
[2] *Life*, xiii. 11.
[3] Teresa, *Life*, xvii. 7.
[4] Montaigne, *Essays*, Book II., c. i.

The first step in genuine introspection is to discover that, after all, self-knowledge is exceedingly hard to attain. There are two special characters in religious introspection that at once force themselves upon the attention of one who is beginning to reflect. Many thoughts and impulses are referred in a seemingly arbitrary way to an external power, and it is not always clear why a person should not say outright, "I thought so," instead of "the Lord said to me," with St Teresa and George Fox.[1] And yet we must not force the living expression of the saint into any preconceived formulæ. This reference of thought and impulse to an external source is not unreasonable if we bear in mind that the soul is not something self-existent, but is dependent upon a wider sphere, in which it is included. Psychology proceeds too often as though the soul were the entire world in itself. Then again there is a certain inarticulateness in religious experiences. "At other times I learnt some things without the help of words and that more clearly than those things which were told me in words. I understood exceedingly deep truths concerning the Truth, more than I could have done through the teaching of many learned men."[2] The office of the Christian religion in disclosing the soul to itself is described in a striking meta-

[1] We shall consider in later chapters the visions and voices that seem to come from without.

[2] Teresa, *Life*, xl. 6.

phor; "it pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit" (Heb. iv. 12). "I say that it happens to me from time to time—it has done so this very day and so I remember it well—to see my soul tear itself in order to find itself there where the greater part of it is." [1] And, in particular, the Christian teacher has not only to interpret the monitions which stream in from without upon the soul, but those vague movements in which it awakens to knowledge of itself.

We are now able to proceed to the two other leading types of approach to God; the search for intellectual consistency, and the clarification of feeling. Augustine is an imposing example of those who have sought to satisfy the reason in religious truth. At one time he despaired about the truth being found in the Church. "For when my spirit," he says, "tried to run back into the catholic faith, I was smitten back because the catholic faith was not what I thought it to be." [2] The study of the scriptures and of natural science combined with the personal influence of Ambrose in changing his view until he admitted that as against the Manichæans the catholic faith could be affirmed "without impudence." [3] The Christian faith was for him the crown of his studies and he read Plato as the preface to St John.[4] Although the type illustrated by Augustine is not a common one, it has contributed largely to Christianity so

[1] Teresa, *Life*, xvii. 10.
[2] *Conf.* v. 10.
[3] *Ib.*, v. 14.
[4] *Ib.*, vii. 9.

far as it is an intellectual force. The saint was not one of those who, like the ideal convert, can be conducted from the outer gloom to the light in five minutes. He spent the years from eighteen to thirty in passing from one standpoint to another until he could obtain the best view of the truth. This search for the truth in his case as in all other genuine instances, was touched throughout with the utmost richness of feeling. "Great thoughts spring from the heart." "Man," Augustine cries, "is a huge abyss, and his hairs can be counted more easily than the affections and stirrings of his heart."[1] There are few more magical passages in the Latin language than that in which he describes his grief for the death of a friend.[2] We need not wonder that from him the mediæval world drew its vocabulary of religion and of love. Truly deep feeling is also subtle; it is only the shallow soul that is rough and tactless. And this subtlety in Augustine answers to his perception of the complexity of man's nature. The careful reader will note instances of this subtlety in many an unexpected thought. His attention, for example, is attracted by the strange luxury of pity; "mourning alone was pleasant to me, and succeeded my friend as the darling of my spirit." He could reflect, too, upon the mysterious nature of the pleasure which tragedy affords, or again upon the pleasure of contrast between a threatened peril and the relief

[1] *Conf.* iv. 14. [2] *Ib.*, iv. 4.

of escape. Amid this variety of experience he gained a clear idea of the oneness of spiritual life, and then sought a like unity in the course of the history of the world. He shook himself free from the Manichæanism—which is, after all, the mark of a mind not yet at peace with itself—by his famous declaration that evil is nothing but the privation of good,[1] and at last embraced the soul and the world in the one idea of a heavenly society, the *City of God.*

There is an analogy between Bunyan's restlessness until he could be certain of his own salvation, and the speculative movements of Augustine. On both sides the change of conversion was rather intellectual than moral. And further, there is in Bunyan an unresolved contradiction in the way in which he leaves evil as something positive over against the divine beneficence. And so he shares the Manichæanism of Augustine's earlier days. The sceptical method, however, of the polished African is quite beyond the reach of the undisciplined mind of Bunyan, and he gives an amusing caricature of it in his picture of Doubting Castle. The fact that truth is difficult of access—that knowledge shades off from certainty into uncertainty—is the hobgoblin that harasses Christian and Hopeful. One cannot imagine Bunyan saying with Augustine, that "a man need not blush to confess his ignorance, lest by saying falsely that he knows he

[1] *Conf.* iii. 7.

should deserve never to know" ; nor with Richard Baxter, that "I am not so foolish as to pretend my certainty to be greater than it is, merely because it is a dishonour to be less certain ; nor will I, by shame, be kept from confessing those infirmities, which those have as much as I, who hypocritically reproach me with them."[1] But what was excusable in the case of the Bedford tinker, with his limited opportunities, is not a precedent for everybody. It is a striking and noticeable fact that most forms of religious belief still cling to the method of Bunyan which involves after all the suicide of the reason, and have not yet learnt from the great masters of apologetics who speak in the dialect of a freer age.

Lastly, conversion may take the shape of a clarification of feeling. Of course it is not to be supposed that these types are clearly marked off one from another. Sometimes a single mind will exhibit their joint characteristics almost in equal degrees. Thus Augustine finds peace as well as intellectual satisfaction. Still there are cases where the doctrines of religion are accepted and the maxims of religion obeyed, while the spirit has to reach through many a struggle of feeling to a settled state. Sometimes these conditions are found in the outer world ; sorrow and disappointment may be a dolorous way to God along which perhaps the majority of beautiful souls attain their beauty. The discipline of life

[1] Wordsworth, *Ecclesiastical Biography*, v. 569.

thus becomes for many men the instrument of spiritual advance. Physical weakness throws the soul back upon the support of others, and thus forces it to realise the community of mankind. And in realising this dependence, it comes to know itself more truly, and so to enter upon the life of faith. Dale regretted that he was not disciplined in this way until a late period in his life.[1] It is another indication of the futility of some popular theories about conversion, that this mode should be almost overlooked in comparison with the more mechanical modes.

I can imagine someone objecting that we ought not to separate the change of motive from its emotional accompaniments. There is a very good reason however for doing so. In a later chapter we shall see that mechanical suggestion —in fact hypnotism, acting as it does upon impressionable and sometimes diseased natures, plays a very large part in instantaneous conversion.[2]

An artificial atmosphere in which emotion is forced is furnished not only by the religious assembly, but also by the cloister, and we owe to its inmates some of the most striking descriptions of the history of emotion. There, so to speak, the ordinary emotional life is magnified. No one has described the night of the soul more vividly than the Spaniard, St John of the Cross.

Yet the religious life cannot be separated from the other experiences of the soul, not even by the

[1] *Life*, 631. [2] P. 117.

solitude of the convent. For the relation between the religious and other impulses is a very close one, and the deepening of the emotional nature which marks the attainment of physical maturity is expressed partly in a greater susceptibility to religious considerations. The self-discipline which is then entered upon is often associated with a more specific religious profession, and is a most important factor in building up character. The exercises and objects of religious feeling furnish an emotional outlet which relieves the storm and stress of these years, and renders the control of self more easy. Yet there are limits to this office of religion, and very serious dangers are incurred when even religious emotion is cultivated in excess. We shall return to this topic in a later chapter.

If it is impossible to separate one group of emotions from the rest, it is not less impossible to separate religious thought from the temper which it expresses. It follows that the creed, in which the theologian has formulated his own experience, must be translated back into their own experience by those who accept it. It is in this sense that faith can be regarded in a threefold aspect, as an affection, a belief, a motive. Faith is nothing unless it lives ; unless it springs from the depths, and controls the exterior conduct, of the soul. (Hence belief, in the technical sense, can never be reduced to a simple assent, as the sect maintain to which Faraday belonged.) But it does more than

this; it moves beyond itself to an object which it affirms. So far as the operations of faith go beyond the experience upon which they supervene, they may be described with a certain propriety as "a work of God in us."[1] And it is because the object of Christian faith is not the mere outcome of what has preceded it, that Christianity is not a natural but a positive religion, that is a revelation.[2] Yet, as psychologists, we are not concerned with the outward declarations of belief. On the inside, faith can be described as that experience to which the Christian life tends, an attitude of the soul to an object which is shared by all.

The ideal of spiritual perfection which is presented to the soul in the act of faith, brings with it a consciousness of the contrast between this ideal and the heritage of character which we have received or acquired. This contrast is also a condemnation of what is discordant with the ideal, and so we reach the peculiar quality that attaches to the notion of sin.

In some cases the soul marks itself off so clearly on the side of the ideal over against its old self, that the old self is spoken of as something alien. Augustine indeed says that his wickedness divided him against himself; he might equally have said that his aspirations had done so.[3]

[1] Luther, quoted by Herrmann, *op. cit.*, 170.
[2] Smith, *Prophets of Israel* (1895 ed.), 168. [3] *Conf.* v. 10.

There is a certain character, however, of the Christian ideal which makes it impossible that the sense of sin should ever entirely disappear from the awakened consciousness. The Christian ideal is not one that can be reached by the individual who is living to himself; it can only be realised in its appropriate environment, in the Christian society; and since this social ideal is never more than partly realised, conduct can never be more than approximately perfect. On the other hand, every falling short contributes to the imperfection of the society, and so perpetuates the evil. It is easy to see that the doctrine of original sin gains meaning when it is applied, not to the individual, but to the race; and that it involves the condemnation by an ideal, of the character which the ideal also determines. We must ask—not whether the individual deserves to be condemned, but whether his character is conformable to this given standard or not. From such a point of view the doctrines of human depravity and original sin become true, even if partial, statements of fact.

The reason why these doctrines have sometimes been misunderstood is that the soul has been regarded individually, instead of in its social relations. The Christian life is not that of a solitary pilgrim, but of the member of a great society. It follows that the Church is a body of sinners, and in the world can never be anything else. Its ideal can never be realised com-

pletely. Only through neglect of the social character of religion can the pretensions of some sects to Christian perfection be explained. In laying down moral judgments, therefore, we must be quite clear whether we have in view the individual or the society. Just as psychological truth is only partially attainable so long as we have in view the individual alone, so it is with moral and spiritual truth. It is one of the marks of the superficiality of theosophy that the moral progress exhibited by it is that of the individual alone, apart from his context, from the social life in which he attains reality. In fact the very idea of a second incarnation seems to contradict what seems to be a universal condition of the individual's life. A further objection is this, they talk "as if it were possible for *any* soul to clothe itself in *any* body."[1] Whereas the soul is to be viewed on the one hand in relation to other souls, on the other hand in relation to the body, which, for that matter, is also a social product. To mention one fact only, mere physical well-being is only maintained by the co-operation of producers and distributers in an organised society and through a complex system of trades. Any system, then, which fails to take account of these two factors can never give an adequate account of the spiritual conflict of which the beginning has now been described.

[1] Aristotle, *de anima*, i. 3.

CHAPTER V

ECSTASY

Distinction between the "normal" and the "average"—Expression in countenance—Contagion of feeling—Solitude—Effect of a crowd—Seizures and fashion in them—Relation to hypnotism—Excitement and miracles—Levitation and bilocation—Physical accompaniments of the mystical life—Orgiastic excesses—Conversion by hypnotism—Sensible effects of ideas.

ALONG with the religious life of which the beginning has been described, there go certain reactions between those parts of the soul's life with which we are more specially concerned, and other parts. We shall consider in this chapter the excitement that accompanies the first stirrings of the religious life, and in the next the revulsion that, by an inevitable law, follows upon ecstatic illumination, namely, the dark night of the soul.

But the reader is to be warned once more against supposing that every departure from what is usual is therefore morbid. He is to extend his ideas of the range of human experience,[1] in the directions of ecstasy, on the one hand, and of melancholy on the other.

It is natural to expect that not only the ex-

[1] P. 12.

citements and revulsions which attend the birth-throes of the spirit will find outward expression, but that also the inward peace, which sometimes comes as the result of such a conflict, will show itself in the countenance and gait. There are faces to be seen here and there on which a heavenly light gleams, at least for those whose eyes have been opened. The spirit seems to remould the body to itself in such a way that after the physical beauty of the earlier years there comes later a spiritual beauty even of the countenance, in which the first comeliness is transfigured. Persons whose thoughts have been habitually conversant with great matters take a trace of them, and this circumstance is not confined to the religious life. Old actors especially gain this impressiveness of look. Perhaps it is because they have exercised their facial muscles in voicing the whole gamut of emotion and so have moulded themselves into a kind of human epitome, like the head of the Almighty Father in Pesellino's *Trinity*, or in Blake's illustrations to the *Book of Job*. Sometimes this change of appearance takes place suddenly. Fox says of himself on one occasion: "I was very much altered in countenance and person, as if my body had been new moulded or changed."[1] When St Teresa was writing the *Fortress of the Soul*, her face was seen to shine, by Mother Anne of the Incarnation.[2] At the same time outward things

[1] *Journal*, 1647.

[2] *Life*, tr. by Lewis, 99 *n*.

are a very imperfect clue to what is within. I know some saintly persons who have the look of detected thieves, and other persons with the look of an apostle whom I would not trust for a moment. Still these exceptions are not fatal. We have already seen that the devotional life sometimes leads to an excessive self-humiliation, and self-approbation can give more blandness to a glance than the peace of God within the heart. Nothing, however, can be more intolerable than the attempt to set a fashion in expressing religious feeling.

If the soul to some extent moulds the body to itself, on the other hand, physiological changes have a good deal to do with the religious life. "The disquiet of the soul," says St Teresa, "comes most frequently from bodily indisposition —I have had great experience in the matter, and I know it is true; for I have carefully observed it and discussed it afterwards with spiritual persons —for we are so wretched that this poor prisoner of a soul shares in the miseries of the body. The changes of the seasons and the alterations of the humours very often compel it, without any fault of its own, not to do what it would, but rather to suffer in every way. Meanwhile the more we force the body on these occasions, the greater the mischief and the longer it lasts. Some discretion must be used in order to understand whether ill-health be the occasion or not. The poor soul must not be stifled. Let those who thus suffer

understand that they are ill."[1] This last saying of Teresa ought to be written in letters of gold before the eyes of all who are artificially excited by religious gatherings. There is a natural exaltation of feeling when the mind directs itself upon sublime objects, but this is too often confused with the lower kind of excitement which is produced when human beings are assembled together in a crowd. This latter form of excitement may be traced under the heads of contagion of feeling and hypnotic suggestion.

Contagion of feeling is best understood perhaps by setting it over against the influence of solitude. Four years ago I spent in the Lakes a week of almost complete solitude, broken only about once a day by a visitor. This was not much perhaps to boast of in the way of being a hermit, but it was enough to teach me one or two things. I had never realised until then how intimately the sense of the neighbourhood of other human beings enters into almost every experience. I felt in my loneliness as if one part of my soul had been wrenched away, and there was also a curious mixture of pain and a feeling of expansion as though some strivings previously cramped could now express themselves. I was conscious of a greater range of feeling, being at times more exalted, and at other times more depressed than in ordinary circumstances, when for most men the presence of others acts like a check upon variation in either of these two directions.

[1] *Life*, xi. 23.

But now take the case of a company of human beings who are simultaneously excited. Even a very slight rise in the general level of feeling deprives us to some extent of the inhibition by which we are ordinarily influenced, and the change in the direction of greater freedom makes the spirit begin to rock upon its foundations like a passenger staggering upon the deck of a steamer when it puts out from calm water into the deep. The first movement makes some persons gasp in anticipation of what is to come. Apply this to the religious life. Assembling together in a congregation has effects which can easily be marked off. A certain temper is excited, and there is a beginning of enthusiasm, a quickening of love.[1] Hence there is a tendency to identify religious feeling with fellowship in a religious society. When Victorinus said to his Christian friend Simplicianus, "Now you shall know that I am a Christian," he replied, "I will not believe it nor count you among the Christians until I see you in the Church of Christ."[2] It is clear that the growth of the religious community is, for the most part, dependent upon the communication of the religious impulse. And while this impulse may be generated by independent reflection or by conscious imitation of others, these means are less efficient and available for most men than the less articulate but more profound effects produced by assembling together.

[1] *Hebrews* x. 24.

[2] Augustine, *Conf.* viii. 2.

It is clear, then, that the heightening of feeling which is produced in this way, is characteristic of the religious experience. Hence it is one-sided to insist on the effects of seclusion as though they alone adequately accounted for that experience.[1] This much, however, may be affirmed ; that over against the deepened social life of the religious society stands the exalted life of the individual, an exaltation produced by solitude, discipline, and reflection.

The sudden emphasis of the social factor in religious gatherings, therefore, produces effects not less remarkable than those which are produced at the other extreme by solitude. We shall consider these effects now in some of their extreme physical manifestations. Those who are sermon-hardened may be incredulous when it is said that the human voice raised amid circumstances of strangeness, anticipation, and suppressed excitement, has the power of sending too highly strung hearers into fits. When the Rev. John M'Neill complained that his Scotch hearers could soak up a great amount of preaching and make no sign, he paid a sincere compliment to their soundness of mind. Hearers with a mental equipment inferior to theirs are protected by custom. It is well that it is so. Religious excitement is one of the most powerful agents in producing insanity, and will always be viewed with apprehension by those who have even faintly

[1] H. R. Marshall, *Mind*, New Series, No. 21, 50.

realised this fact. It is well known in the Lakes that the Keswick Convention yearly produces a crop of nervous disorders of a more or less serious kind, disorders which sometimes break out into acute mania. I would suggest that along with the other texts and inscriptions which they display, the authorities of that convention should write up the saying of St Teresa, *Let those who thus suffer understand that they are ill.* Some teachers of religion trespass into the province of medicine. When seizures began to be frequent among the crowds who attended Wesley's teaching, he regarded them as special evidences of the divine favour and sang the *Te Deum.* A physician would have employed the treatment proper to epilepsy or hysteria.

On the first of January 1739, Wesley and about sixty others spent the night in continual prayer. "About three o'clock in the morning the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy and many fell to the ground. As soon as we recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty, we broke out with one voice: 'We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord!'" On the 28th of the same month Wesley went with some friends "to a house where was one of those commonly called French prophets. After a time she came in. She seemed about four or five and twenty, of an agreeable speech and

behaviour. She asked why we came, I said, 'to try the spirits whether they be of God.' Presently after she leaned back in her chair and seemed to have strong workings in her breast with deep sighings intermixed. Her hands and head, and by turns every part of her body seemed also to be in a kind of convulsive motion. This continued about ten minutes, till at six she began to speak; though the workings, sighings, and contortions of her body were so mixed with her words that she seldom spoke half a sentence together. She spoke much all as in the person of God and mostly in Scripture words." Wesley was not certain whether she spoke by the spirit of God or not. From this case it is clear that the public mind was at the time more or less familiarised with the idea of seizures which accompany religious exercises. Not only so; Wesley himself seems to have regarded them as the token of divine approval. On April the 26th, in the same year, he records in his diary: "While I was preaching at Newgate on these words, *He that believeth hath everlasting life*, I was insensibly led without any previous design to declare strongly and explicitly that God willeth all men to be thus saved, and to pray that if this were not the truth of God, He would not suffer the blind to go out of the way, but if it were He would bare witness to His word. Immediately one and then another sunk to the earth: they dropped on every side as thunderstruck. In the evening one was

so wounded by the sword of the spirit that you would have imagined she could not live a moment." [1] Wesley himself cannot be acquitted of taking advantage of this epidemic when he called upon God to display His power in this particular way. A more powerful way of suggesting a seizure to the hysterical persons in his audience could scarcely be imagined.

There are fashions in these things. While the hearers of Wesley dropped to the ground as if dead, during a great Presbyterian revival which passed over Kentucky and Tennessee in the beginning of this century, persons swooned away and lay as if dead on the ground for a quarter of an hour, and this "falling exercise" was succeeded by the jerks. A backwoods preacher who has left a valuable autobiography says:

"A new exercise broke out among us called the *jerks* which was overwhelming in its effects upon the bodies and minds of the people. No matter whether they were saints or sinners, they would be taken under a warm song or sermon and seized with a convulsive jerking all over which they could not by any possibility avoid, and the more they resisted the more they jerked. I have seen more than five hundred persons jerking at one time in my large congregations. Most usually persons taken with the jerks would rise up and dance. Some would run but could not get away. To see those proud young gentlemen and young

[1] Wesley's *Journals*, under respective dates.

ladies dressed in their silks, jewellery, and prunella from top to toe, take the jerks, would often excite my risibilities. The first jerk or so you would see their fine bonnets, caps, and combs fly: and so sudden would be the jerking of the head that their long loose hair would crack almost as loud as a waggoner's whip."[1]

These strange accompaniments of religious fervour seem partly original, springing from over-excitement and hysteria; partly imitative, the report of such things tending in some minds to suggest imitation. There is thus a kind of physical hypocrisy as well as a moral one. The subjects of many of these seizures yield to them almost against their will and at variance with their own highest promptings. Hence the sense of shame which is often found in those who are so carried away. They are surprised by what seems to be an upheaval of their lower nature, the revolt of the lower nervous centres, and the disorder of the higher. There is thus an intimate connection between these phenomena and those of hypnotism. Leaving this point for a moment, let us note that the hearers of Wesley were doubtless more or less familiar with the strange experiences of the Camisards, to whom the French prophetess seems to have belonged. Wesley refers to them several times in the *Journals*, and seems, towards the end of his life, to have come to the conclusion that these experiences, instead

[1] Quoted in Baring Gould, *Strange Survivals*, 174.

of bearing the stamp of the divine approval, were the work of Satan. Speaking of some of his converts near Chapel en le Frith, he says: "It is chiefly among these enormous mountains" (he is speaking of the Peak country) "that so many have been awakened, justified and soon after perfected in love; but even while they are full of love, Satan strives to push many of them to extravagance. This appears in several instances.

"Frequently three or four, yea, ten or twelve, pray aloud all together. Some of them, perhaps many, scream all together as loud as they possibly can. Some of them use improper, yea, indecent expressions in prayer. Several drop down as dead and are as stiff as a corpse, but in a while they start up and cry 'Glory, Glory,' perhaps twenty times together. Just so do the French Prophets, and very lately the Jumpers in Wales, bringing the real work into contempt."[1] No religious teaching has the monopoly of such effects as these. They arise out of the universal qualities of human nature. They are found beyond, as well as within, the pale of Christianity, and are the chief physiological basis of the nature religions. They characterise the beginnings of all great religious movements, and seem especially to have marked the first century of Christian history. The night-long vigils of the love-feast in Fetterlane had the same results as the agapae at Corinth, namely, in a certain mental

[1] *Journals*, April 3, 1786.

disordering. But it is not here that the secret of Christ is found. The Saviour of the world laid a cool hand upon the brow of humanity as it throbbed with multitudinous impulses, and by a miracle more admirable than that of the Galilean lake, calmed the spiritual tempest into the peace of God. *Let not your hearts be troubled* are the words of One who heals the mind, and they condemn all presumptuous intrusion upon the soul's tranquillity.

There is no doubt, then, that religious excitement is accompanied by what is unusual, wonderful, that is to say, miraculous. Let anyone who has put down the New Testament as unreliable because of the miraculous elements which it contains, turn to it again after becoming acquainted with corresponding occurrences in other ages, and he will find that much that before offended his sense of the probable, is really a strong testimony to the candour of its writers. Let him take, for example, the topic of demoniac possession. As we have just seen, human beings are exposed to disorders in which the control of self, which marks the highest life, is temporarily suspended. The more primitive strata of experience are exposed to view, and if, as St Augustine says, evil is but the privation of the good, we need not be surprised that the reference to evil spirits should suggest itself.

And so the fact that the lower forms of the religious life lead to wonderful occurrences will prevent us from saying too hastily that this or

that occurrence is impossible. In particular, there are serious reasons for hesitating before we declare that a human being cannot rise in the air or float along the sea in defiance of gravity ; or that in defiance of bolts and bars, and of the limitations of space, he cannot be in more than one place at once, or, if you like, that he cannot pass with infinite rapidity from one place to another. I was once talking about this to a friend of mine—whose word, by the way, I would take against yours, kind reader, whoever you may be—and he assured me that, when he was a boy, he had the power, by holding his breath, of floating a few paces through the air without touching the ground. I was astounded when he said so, for he is a man whose life is spent amid realities, and I tried by cross-examination to shake his statement, but without effect. I am not quite convinced that he has not made a mistake. But I no longer retain the happy assurance that nothing can happen which I am not used to. I may say in passing that my friend regarded this as a purely physiological fact, and did not claim for it any moral significance. He has now lost the power. When, therefore, St Teresa declares that she was sometimes lifted up in a similar way, I am also perplexed and do not forthwith make up my mind that the saint is lying. "You feel and see yourself carried away," she says, "you know not whither. For though we feel how delicious it is, yet the weakness of our nature makes us afraid at first, and we

require a much more resolute and courageous spirit than in the previous states in order to risk everything, come what may, and to abandon ourselves into the hands of God, and go willingly where we are carried, however painful it may be. And so trying is it that I would very often resist, and exert all my strength, particularly at those times when the rapture was coming upon me in public. I did so, too, very often when I was alone, because I was afraid of delusions. Occasionally I was able by a great effort to make a slight resistance, but afterwards I was worn out, like a person who had been contending with a strong giant; at other times it was impossible to resist at all; my soul was carried away, and almost always my head with it—I had no power over it—and now and then my whole body as well, so that I was lifted from the ground. This has not happened to me often: once, however, it took place when we were altogether in choir, and I on my knees on the point of communicating. It was a very sore distress to me, for I thought it a most extraordinary thing, and was afraid it would occasion much talk; so I commanded the nuns—for it happened after I was made prioress—never to speak of it."[1] And again with reference to bilocation, that is the power of appearing at a distance, I am not so certain as I once was. I have never come across a person who had seen a phantom of the dying, although I have frequently reached such stories within one

[1] *Life*, xx. 4, 5.

remove from the subject of them. And if persons at the point of death can thus appear, it is not altogether clear why others who are in ordinary health may not do so. Hence again I am not so certain as I once was that St Alphonso di Liguori could not preach a sermon in church while he was also confessing penitents at home. Mother van Valckenissen too "had the gift of bilocation, appearing in several places at the same time, shedding a trail of delicious fragrance wherever she passed."[1] On the whole these stories seem somewhat far-fetched, and I hang towards unbelief in this particular. But I should not now stigmatise the narrator of such a story as a fool and a liar. For what am I to say to Mrs Besant who declares that she can leave her body at will?[2]

But perhaps, as my friend says, levitation and bilocation are purely physiological facts (supposing that is, that they are verified), and are only on the outskirts of the life of the spirit. The same is to be said about the curious enumeration of symptoms which M. Huysmans dwells upon as if they were the very secret of the mystical life. He speaks of the sufferings of Mother van Valckenissen and of St Catherine Emmerich as though the spiritual life were a department of pathology. Still, there is a certain reasonableness in this after all.[3] In the Christian life, the body is sublimed by being taken up into the life of the spirit,

[1] Huysmans, *Cathedral*, Eng. trans., 98.
[2] *Borderland*, vol. ii., 216.
[3] *En Route*, 141 (Eng. trans.). *Cathedral*, 95 (Eng. trans.).

and it cannot be indifferent to us when certain physiological events are found to accompany the noblest human experiences. The tendency to dwell upon the physical sufferings of Jesus is justified when we bear in mind that they accompanied the crisis of His earthly mission, and so the crucifix becomes a truer and more universal symbol of human life than the superficial beauty of the Hermes of Praxiteles. It is curious, however, that some shrink from the visible representations of the Passion, who yet find a satisfaction in singing the most sensuous hymns. I have never been able to understand why those who use the most figurate language possible about sacred events should yet find fault with others who make use of visible representations ; why, for instance, it should be right to sing Cowper's hymn, *There is a fountain filled with blood*, and wrong to make use of the Stations of the Cross. It seems probable that even the visible exhibition of suffering has its office to fulfil. There are many persons who steadfastly close their eyes to the sorrow of the world. For them it must be wholesome to be reminded of the great refining agency in human life, the crucible in which self is dissolved away,—or petrified ! And so we come back to our starting-point. The physical accompaniments of the mystical life are perhaps nothing more than the natural expression, in the countenance and bearing, of the soul's changes, and all the strange symptoms of which some writers have said so much are unimportant in comparison with the states of

mind which they accompany. At the same time, if the highest forms of the spiritual experience find a necessary counterpart in a certain external expression, we cannot be indifferent to that expression.

The soul is perhaps never so completely organised, even in the most advanced religious life, that all its experiences come together in one universe of thought, feeling, and desire. Impulses break up the momentary peace, seeming to rise from unexplored abysses as though from another world. This is especially the case when we attempt to school ourselves to a state in which some of our powers fail to find their natural expression. We can hold them in check for a time, but at last they tend to break all barriers and it may be that, at some unusually favourable opportunity, they carry us away. In nearly every kingdom of the mind there are these insurgent principles. "Sometimes," Bunyan said, "when I have been preaching, I have been violently assaulted with thoughts of blasphemy, and strongly tempted to speak the words with my mouth before the congregation."[1] The mere sense of what is binding upon us sets in relief these opposing impulses, and marks their lawless character. As Augustine said of his robbing an orchard, the mere fact that it was not permitted attracted him. Sin is literally created by the law. The apparently external character of the

[1] *Grace Abounding*, par. 293.

lawless impulse, that is its variance from our better self, finds expression in the belief that it is an evil spirit, and St John of the Cross unconsciously mixes myth with his psychology by setting the evil spirit over against and parallel with other motives. Sometimes the revolt of nature against the system we would impose upon her becomes successful over the whole field. There is a limit beyond which even the control of religion may not pass, under penalty of entire expulsion from the life ; not because of any intrinsic imperfection in the religious ideal, but because the equilibrium of the soul is a dynamical one, not statical, and the entire disregard of any set of powers, means the ultimate disorganisation of the human nature of which they are an intrinsic part. The strictest sects have often passed into an entire lawlessness, antinomianism. "My calling lying in the country, I happened to light into several people's company, who, though strict in Religion formerly, yet were also swept away by these Ranters. These would also talk of me of their ways, and condemn me as legal and dark ; pretending that they only had attained to perfection that could do what they would and not sin."[1]

The feeling that an evil impulse is after all something external, produces the belief in possession by evil spirits, and when this fact is visualised in hallucinations, we are met by the belief in devils. It is only when the evil impulse persists

[1] *Grace Abounding*, par. 45.

that it seems to be thus personified. More modern expressions for the same events are *fixed idea* for the persisting impulse; and *obsession*, instead of possession by an evil spirit. Bunyan gives a pathetic account of his obsession by a fixed idea, and speaks of it as a devil.[1] Not only so; Wesley records a similar experience which he interprets in the same way as Bunyan. "I was a little surprised at some who were buffeted of Satan in an unusual manner by such a spirit of laughter as they could in no wise resist, though it was pain and grief unto them. I could scarce have believed the account they gave me had I not known the same thing ten or eleven years ago. Part of Sunday my brother and I then used to spend in walking in the meadows and singing psalms. But one day, just as we were beginning to sing, he burst out into loud laughter. I asked him if he was distracted, and began to be very angry and afterwards to laugh as loud as he. Nor could we possibly refrain, though we were ready to tear ourselves in pieces; but we were forced to go home without singing another line."[2] Sydenham had already recognised hysteria in men before Wesley was born; that state in which human beings tend to act upon suggestion; to imitate unreasoningly; to obey unreasoningly. And there could scarcely be a better example of its beginnings than in the story told by Wesley.[3] Or perhaps we had better say that we have here

[1] *Grace Abounding*, par. 38. [2] *Journals*, May 9, 1740.
[3] Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman*, 280.

one condition of hysteria, neurasthenia "which is a general condition of agitation of the nervous system, and is found with especial frequency in both men and women who overstrain their brains, in artists and writers and those who are over-strenuous in social movements." [1] Although in neurasthenia there is really deficient power, there appears in accordance with a well-recognised law of nervous stimulation to be an increase of nervous energy. This is because there is a decrease of nerve resistance, and the nervous system responds too readily and too emphatically to slight degrees of stimulation. This exaggerated excitability which is characteristic of neurasthenia, is therefore closely associated with that loss of complete control which is found to be an essential element in all hypnotic phenomena.

We are now prepared to take up a topic referred to before—conversion by hypnotic suggestion.[2] The reader will perhaps remember that in the other kinds of conversion there was a more or less prolonged period of preparation for the change, as the soul came to harmony of intellectual judgment or to peace after stress. As against these modes, instantaneous conversion seems explicable by saying that the mind is occupied with a suggestion when it is in a suggestible state, when that is, it is subject to neurasthenia. It is fortunate, of course, that the same nervous weakness which lays a man open

[1] Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman*, 279. [2] P. 93.

to control by passing impulses should now and then subject him to a good impulse; but this weakness is not a normal state, and there is something inexpressibly repulsive in the idea that the religious life should necessarily begin in this way. Jesus did not so view conversion. The leavening of meal, the growth of the seed, the finding of hidden treasure, the recovery of a lost silver coin exactly contradict the widespread idea that divine truth is apprehended suddenly and at once. It is first the blade, then the ear, then the grain in the ear. "In the matter of conversion," says Newman, "my own feelings were not violent but a returning to, a renewing of, feelings under the power of the Holy Spirit, which I had already felt and in a measure acted on when young."[1] The methods of the revivalist, however, are cleverly calculated to throw the soul off its balance and to seize it in its moment of humiliating weakness. There is an unholy art of forcing the pace of the soul as it draws near to God; for which purpose it is necessary to produce that unnatural excitement in which the soul is at the mercy of the passing impulse. But there is a perilously slight division between religious excitement of this kind and more earthly excitement. Such methods are in truth a return to the methods of the nature religions, and are often accompanied by similar consequences. In this connection pride is often

[1] *Letters*, i. 109.

vigorously denounced as a hindrance in the way to God, when what is really meant by pride, is that simple manliness which refuses to resign self-reverence and self-control at the bidding of presumptuous ignorance. Yet after all religion is also the medicine for the excitement in which sometimes it takes its rise. When the stirrings of the spirit find an outlet in appropriate activities, the feelings are clarified, deepened, and relieved. It is the true glory of contemporary religious life that it insists upon good works, not, indeed, as part of man's bargain with God, but as the natural expression of enthusiasm. St Teresa passes an unconscious criticism upon her mode of life when she says: "The inward stirring of my love urges me to do something for the service of God; and I am not able to do more than adorn images with boughs and flowers, clean or arrange an oratory, or some such trifling acts, so that I am ashamed of myself." One can imagine the Spanish nun with her enigmatical expression—something like that of La Gioconda—moving about the little convent chapel vainly endeavouring to soothe her restless spirit as she plied the brush and duster. "I used," she says, "to try exterior good works in order to occupy myself." [1] Yet I do not think she can fairly be charged with having trifled her time away. There is room for persons with a contemplative bent in religion, and one who sets others a-thinking does

[1] *Life*, xxx. 18, 25.

many times more at second hand, sometimes, than could have been done at first hand. It is a vulgar materialism that exalts the lower above the higher; Jesus after all praised Mary and not Martha.

The physical accompaniments of religious excitement culminate in a kind of trance, and this in turn often leads to after-consequences in the forms of visions and voices. These we shall reserve for further consideration. We shall also consider in detail later the intellectual relations which are expressed outwardly by the experiences with which we are now dealing.

For we cannot isolate the things of reason from those of sense. There is a sensuous aspect of divine truth which is inseparable from it in our present experience and cannot be overlooked with impunity. "I cannot help thinking," said General Gordon, "that the body has much to do with religion." [1] We cannot clearly think of God without some, at least, of the physical stirrings which St Teresa and others describe in an extreme form. The judgment even when it is occupied with religion cannot work in a vacuum. To regard God without particular apprehensions of the imagination is "to destroy Christianity under the pretence of purifying it." [2]

How do we come to know God and to commune with Him? Unless we are to suppose that each soul is enclosed in a self-existent unity, we

[1] Qu. C. Patmore, *Rod, Root and Flower*, p. 121.
[2] Qu. *ib.*, 125.

must admit that it enters into relations of dependence with something beyond itself, and this act of reaching out beyond itself comes to self-consciousness in communion with other souls and again with God. We have already marked off some of the more immediate effects of the realised common life, in the contagion, and the intensifying of feeling. We are now going to note some of the peculiar accompaniments of the idea of God's presence when vividly realised. There can be no doubt about the psychological energy of this idea. "I was not strong enough to bear any vivid sense of God's presence," Dale says of himself when he was recovering from an illness. In fact he seems to have shrunk from the idea as too much for him, and declares that the "divine strength shows no sign of its presence except in the success of our work."[1] For the vivid realisation of the presence of God brings pain. "The enraptured soul," says St Teresa, "is, as it were, crucified between earth and heaven, enduring its passion. Only the agony carries with it so great a joy that I know of nothing wherewith to compare it. It is a sharp martyrdom full of sweetness: for if any earthly thing be then offered to the soul, even though it may be that which it habitually found most sweet, the soul will have none of it."[2] In fact it may be said that the result of these experiences is to render the ordinary duties of life distasteful and to

[1] *Life*, 621. [2] *Ib.*, xx. 14.

suspend the powers of the soul. Teresa dwells upon the pain which accompanies the cessation of these periods of rapture and the way in which everything is forgotten. She views the ordinary and regular operations of thought as so many distractions. "The restless little butterfly of memory has its wings burnt now and cannot fly."[1] There is, therefore, a very real conflict between the religious and the scientific temper. Enough, perhaps, has been said, notably by Mill in his autobiography, upon the danger of cultivating the power of analysis too far, and of its deadening effect upon the feelings. We must remember also that the unrestrained indulgence in religious emotion paralyses the judgment and the will. "I had," Bunyan declares, "two or three times, at or about my deliverance from this temptation, such strange apprehensions of the Grace of God that I could hardly bear up under it, it was so out of measure amazing, when I thought it could reach me. I do think, if that sense of it had abode long upon me, it would have made me incapable for business."[2] The great mystics are very emphatic in their warnings about this, and one of them is quoted by Tauler as saying that "overflowing spiritual emotions consume the spirit." In consequence the soul passes at times from the heights of ecstasy to an abyss of gloom, and heavenly rapture is succeeded by a revulsion, of which we shall treat in the next chapter under the title of *the dark night of the soul.*

[1] *Life*, xvii. 9; xviii. 19. [2] *Grace Abounding*, par. 252.

CHAPTER VI

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

Rhythms of feeling—Despair—Ennui—Bad temper—Course of night described—Its two stages: purification of the senses and of the spirit—Peace—Augustine—Bunyan—Humility and detachment of view—Melancholy—Cruelty—Toleration.

THE life of religious feeling is not uniform. It moves in great rhythms; and exaltation is followed by depression. The saint falls sometimes from an immediate consciousness of the divine presence to the blackest depths. "I was now so taken," says Bunyan on one occasion, "with the love and mercy of God that I remember I could not tell how to contain until I got home. I thought I could have spoken of His love and told of His mercy to me even to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me had they been capable to have understood me: wherefore I said in my soul with much gladness, 'Well, would I had a pen and ink here I would write this down before I go any further, for surely I will not forget this forty years hence.' But, alas, within less than forty days I began to question all again, and by times fell to my old courses again, which made me begin to question

all still."[1] How futile then is the attempt to reach an immovable certainty of feeling! "It is impossible," says Herrmann, "for the pious mystic to gain any such assurance of an inward truth as cannot possibly be buried and lost altogether amid the alternation of excitement and reaction."[2] There is a pathetic passage in Renan's life; in his time of disillusion he imagines that others too have traversed the same path. "He cannot consider the obscurity which envelopes the end of St Paul without reflecting that the convert may be converted more than once; the disenchanted saint may have passed over to the creed of *Ecclesiastes* and the Sceptics. Convinced that he had given his life for a dream, Paul may have wandered despairing, resigned, on some Iberian shore, aware of the nothingness of life."[3] Of course there is very little doubt that he too, like St Peter, died the death of a Christian martyr outside the walls of imperial Rome. But a similar question about St Paul presented itself to the mind of Bunyan, with the further possibility of bad faith. "Though we made so great a matter of St Paul and of his words, yet how could I tell but that in very deed, he being a subtle and cunning man, might give himself up to deceive with strong delusions, and also take the pains and travel to undo and destroy his fellows?"[4]

[1] *Grace Abounding*, par. 92. [2] *Communion with God*, 151.
[3] *Life of Renan*, Darmesteter, 210.
[4] *Grace Abounding*, par. 98.

Such doubts as these are the immediate reflection of changed feelings, and are to be distinguished from the examination of the grounds of a truth before we accept it. Bunyan had before his eyes the example of Spira, an advocate of Padua, who, alarmed by the threats of persecution, recanted the reformed doctrines which he had embraced, and spent the remainder of his days in unavailing regrets. "Being desperate," says Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, "by no counsell of learned men could [he] be comforted; he felt, as he said, the pains of hell in his soule, in all other things he discoursed aright, but in this most mad. Frismelica, Bullovat, and some other excellent physicians, could neither make him eat, drink, or sleep; no persuasion could ease him. Never pleaded any man so well for himselfe as this man did against himselfe, and so he desperately died. Springer, a lawyer, hath written his life."[1] This, perhaps, is the true explanation of the alarm which doubt inspires in some devout minds, lest a passing surge of feeling should sweep the soul in a course that after all is repugnant to its underlying convictions. The idea of predestination in which St Paul found comfort, is at such moments of tumult a source of alarm, lest the persisting part of our life should be that which conflicts with our main interest. Nor is this the only shape to which such fear gives rise. Brother Ruffino, one of the com-

[1] Part 3, Sec. 4, Subs. 3, Mem. 5.

panions of St Francis, is recorded to have undergone a course of self-torture like that of Bunyan, with this difference, that whereas Bunyan feared lest he had committed the unpardonable sin, Ruffino thought that he was predestined to be lost.[1]

But there are deeps less profound than these. Short of despair the soul in its weariness becomes the victim of intolerable ennui. This is perhaps a more common form of revulsion after excitement. Bunyan speaks with regret of his deadness, dulness, and coldness in holy duties, his wanderings of heart, his wearisomeness in all good things, his want of love to God, His ways and His people, with this at the end of all. "Are these," he asks, "the fruits of Christianity? are these the tokens of a blessed man?"[2] St John of the Cross would answer that they are. For he describes them as being the gloom through which the soul is conducted on its way. "The sensitive and spiritual appetites," he says, "are mortified, and cannot taste with relish anything human or divine; the feelings are checked and cannot move or strive; the imagination is bound and unable to form any fit thought; the memory is extinguished, the intellect darkened, the will also is narrowed and barren, and all the powers are emptied, and beyond all these things, a thick and heavy cloud oppresses the soul, confining it and keeping it alien and separate from God."[3]

[1] *Little Flowers of St Francis*, c. xxix.
[2] *Grace Abounding*, par. 256. [3] *Dark Night of the Soul*, ii. 16.

Such reactions are the price which the soul pays for the efforts in which it seeks to go beyond itself. But this weakness may be guarded against, and even, as St John of the Cross suggests, made a means of further progress. There is then no reason for surprise when the soul falls into this state. "I am not saying that men should not seek to be devout, nor that they should not stand with great reverence in the presence of God, but only that they are not to vex themselves if they cannot find even one good thought."[1] At the same time it is often produced by religious affectation. When the soul pretends to graces which are denied to it, the effect passes quickly, and "aridity is the result."[2]

This weariness is the source of that shortness of temper, which, as St Teresa says, is a characteristic failing of some devout persons. "At times the devil sends so offensive a spirit of bad temper that I think I could eat people up, nor can I help myself. I feel that I do something when I keep myself under control, or rather our Lord does so, when He holds back with His hand anyone in this state from saying or doing something that may be hurtful to his neighbour or offensive to God."[3] If the affections are thus expended upon the objects and circumstances of worship, there is but a poor remainder of love available for those among whom the rest of the daily life is spent.

[1] Teresa, *Life*, xxii. 18. [2] *Ib.*, xv. 15. [3] *Ib.*, xxx. 15.

Having in this way established the reality of the dark night of the soul in its two forms of weariness and despair, we may now proceed, under the guidance of St John of the Cross, to trace its course. Although the Spanish mystic has those in view who live in the cloister, yet since the cloister simply presents in an exaggerated form some of the characteristics of the religious life however spent, his descriptions will be nearer to the religious life passed in the midst of ordinary duties than might have been expected.

There are two stages in this night; the night of the sense in which the soul is purified and stripped as far as sense is concerned, and so made ready for the spirit; and there is in the second place the night of the spirit in which the soul is again purified and stripped even of the spirit, that so it may attain the union of love with God. The night of the senses is experienced by the many; that of the spirit is confined to those who have already made considerable progress in the religious life.[1] In popular religion disease is supposed to furnish the trials which St John includes under the night of sense; it is pathetic and ludicrous sometimes to find the results of unwholesome surroundings, want of cleanliness and bad cooking, treated as part of the necessary discipline of life, and the victims of their own and others' incompetency treated as though, like Job, their misfortunes were a special token of the divine

[1] St John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, i. 8.

interest. The reason perhaps why disease should gain this religious meaning is after all not far to seek. In the first place, it cuts off the individual for a time from his surroundings, and thus reproduces the artificial conditions of the cloister; in the second place, the desires and impulses which are the expression of physical health fade away and leave the spirit quiet. But the likeness goes further; after a time the soul shrinks from its confinement, becomes infinitely wearied, and tends to irritability. But fortunately disease is no longer glorified in this way, and so the religious life has to be considered more after the fashion of the Spaniard.

"The soul at first," he says, "is filled with pride, and refuses to see any fault in itself."[1] Again you will find many discontented with the spirit which they have received from God, and spending more time in seeking consolation than in good works. Others are harassed by unsuitable and improper feelings in sacred places, and these, says the saint, are to be attributed partly to the fact that the spirit shares in the imperfections of sense, partly to our very shrinking from ideas of this kind, and partly to an evil spirit, which, of course, accounts for everything not otherwise clearly explained.[2] Even friend-

[1] No one who tries to remain susceptible to spiritual values can fail to shrink at the burst of self-glorification with which the English race greets the new century, and thanks God it is not as the Spaniard and the Frenchman.

[2] *Dark Night of the Soul*, i. 4.

ship, we are told, is a hindrance unless it is of a purely spiritual character. The difficulty of the spiritual way produces disappointment and resentment, and one form of this is the anger with which we view the offences of others, "regarding ourselves as the lords and masters of virtue, a circumstance which is opposed to mildness of the spirit." The saint cannot fairly be charged here with making a covert attack upon any of our present national characteristics, for he died in 1591. "Then," he says, "there are the Epicureans, who seek the delight of the spirit rather than true devotion. True devotion consists in patience that perseveres in prayer, humility and self-distrust, and the desire of pleasing God alone."[1] There is a desire even for the Eucharist which passes bounds, and prayer can be indulged in for the sake of sensible delights. In fine, these persons are "like children who are moved to action, not by reason, but by taste and sense," and fall into this imperfection, that they become lukewarm and remiss in treading the true way of the cross. Lastly, their disappointments inspire them with disgust for spiritual things, and at last they taste the sadness which all the time they are shunning. "For whereas they endeavour in spiritual things to walk along the broad path and to live according to the propensity of their will, they find no slight sorrow and repugnance in treading the narrow way of life."[2]

[1] *Dark Night of the Soul*, i. 6. [2] *Op. cit.*, i. 7.

St John distinguished between the obscure night of the sense and mere physical disorder, and marks off three qualities by which we may detect it. First, there is the absence of relish for any created thing; second, the anxiety lest the soul is turning back from God; and, thirdly, the incapacity for meditation.

It is at these moments of weakness that men specially feel the need of an adviser, or confidante.[1] There is a danger at this stage lest the soul should either turn back, or at least should cease to make further progress. Here especially, therefore, haste is dangerous. The idea of God in the soul cannot at once mould it wholly to itself, and must work through long periods of spiritual silence.

From this night there springs a due knowledge of our misery in that we are incapable of serving God as we ought; a knowledge of the divine perfections by contrast with ourselves; and then spiritual humility, from which, in turn, the love of our neighbour springs.

And yet the soul has not yet reached a perfect state of rest. It is now exposed to even more serious temptations. "For to some," says the saint, "a messenger of Satan is sent, a spirit of uncleanness which scourges their senses with abominable and strong temptations, torturing the spirit with foul thoughts and the imagination with visible representations. And this at times is to them a torture more heavy than death itself." [2] There is

[1] P. 283. [2] *Dark Night of the Soul*, i. 14.

little doubt that, for some minds, indulgence in religious emotion predisposes to excesses of a less innocent kind.[1] The scandals which sometimes disgrace the profession of religion are not always the token of hypocrisy on the part of their subjects, but of an unbalanced emotional character which runs the gravest dangers when it is once loosed from its moorings.

A second temptation is that which mingles all their thoughts and imaginations with intolerable blasphemies.[2] Bunyan anticipates the hero of *En Route* when he says: "I had not been long a partaker at that ordinance (of the Supper) but such fierce and sad temptations did attend me at all times therein, both to blaspheme the Ordinance, and to wish some deadly thing to them that did eat thereof; that lest I should at any time be guilty of consenting to these wicked and fearful thoughts, I was forced to bend myself all the while to pray to God to keep me from such blasphemies."[3] In the third place, a further accursed spirit is sent to exercise them, which so obscures their sense as to fill them with a thousand scruples and perplexities, that they can never satisfy themselves.[4] This may be compared with the state which often follows upon conversion.[5] But we can easily distinguish the first scruples of the awakened moral sense from the haunting doubts which beset the soul as it becomes weary of the spiritual world.

[1] P. 94. [2] *Dark Night of the Soul*, i. 14. [3] *Grace Abounding*, 253.
[4] *Dark Night of the Soul*, i. 14. [5] P. 82.

When the first night, that of the senses, is over, the spirit, like one freed from a dark prison, lives with satisfaction in divine things. But even now, times of dryness, of darkness, and oppression come, which presage the coming night of the spirit. Those who through this night are to pass from *meditation* to *contemplation*, are not only entangled still in the traces of old habit, but in particular, says St John, are mocked by visions and voices. "Those who think themselves to be indulged above others with spiritual communications, are made to believe in many empty visions and false prophecies, so that they presume and think that God and His saints commune with them. Hence they lose reverence and the holy fear which is the key and guardian of all the virtues."[1] It is sometimes supposed that the mystical life consists in the hearing of voices and the sight of apparitions. There can be no greater mistake. The author of the *Imitation* uses language like that of St John in warning his readers; "the merits of a man are not to be estimated by his having many visions or consolations."[2] We shall examine in the next two chapters some typical examples of voices and visions, and shall find, I think, that on the whole they have been set below the inspiration of judgment and intention.

The purification of the spirit is necessary for the sake of the sensitive life, inasmuch as the imperfections and disorders of the sensitive part have

[1] *Dark Night of the Soul*, ii. 2. [2] *Imitation of Christ*, iii. 7.

their root and power in the spirit.[1] It is but too often assumed that the regulation of what St John calls the sensitive life, is enough for the good ordering of the whole life. This, however, is but the cleansing of the outside of the platter. The probe of the religious discernment goes deeper than that, "and judges the desires and thoughts of the heart." This indeed is the condemnation of a man's own self in the very centre of his being, and is accompanied by pain and torment. Yet by these pains the soul is made ready to enter into the realm of the oversoul; to receive and assimilate the highest levels of the universe of experience. Newman, in the *Dream of Gerontius*, has used this thought to explain the intermediate state.

> "*O happy, suffering soul! for it is safe,*
> *Consumed, yet quickened by the glance of God.*"

What, on its negative side, is the purification of the spirit, is on its positive side a certain influx of God into the soul; and this influx "contemplatives call infused contemplation or mystical theology."[2] But the act of apprehending divine truth is itself painful. "*These things Ulysses, The wise bards also Behold and sing. But oh, what labour! O prince what pain!*"[3] When the soul breaks away from its anchorage, and puts out by itself over the divine sea, and is alone with the

[1] *Dark Night of the Soul*, ii. 3.
[2] *Ibid.*, ii. 5. For mystical theology, see last chapter.
[3] Matthew Arnold, *The Strayed Reveller*.

stars, it feels the anguish of separation and shivers in its loneliness. It has to endure the loss of all its natural supports and apprehensions. "Such men descend alive into hell, and are cleansed by it as though in purgatory."[1] The fruit of these austere afflictions is a passion of divine love which is granted to the soul. For God never grants mystical wisdom without love.[2]

I am sure the reader who has followed our course up to the present will be able to translate the expressions of the Spanish mystic into more familiar terms. St John is now developing the thought which we have already had expressed in the words of Vauvenargues, "*Great thoughts spring from the heart.*" And then with deep insight, St John goes on to show that "the touch of divine fire is felt in the will, before the touch of perfect intelligence is felt in the intelligence."[3] He escapes the mistake of the superficial psychologists who represent the feelings as dancing attendance upon the judgment. On the other hand, the feelings are kindled before the judgment is illumined.

When it is said that "the sensitive and spiritual powers are lulled to sleep in order that they may be illumined by a supernatural light,"[4] reference is made to the fact that all true insight demands a certain rising above the individual's interests and prejudices. "O spiritual soul, when you see your desire darkened, your feelings barren and re-

[1] *Dark Night of the Soul*, ii. 6.
[2] *Ibid.*, ii. 11, 12.
[3] *Ibid.*, ii. 13.
[4] *Ibid.*, ii. 16.

strained, your faculty for all exterior exercises rendered unfit and impotent, be not therefore afflicted, nay, rather think that a great good fortune has befallen you, since now by taking these powers from you God has freed you from yourself." [1]

The soul gains this peace, which comes as the dawn after the dark night, through substantial contact with the divine nature.[2] Bold as this assertion is, it gains a meaning, I think, if we view it in connection with the oversoul. Through the discipline of austerity and sorrow the soul rises above the mists of earth until it is touched by "*the splendours of the firmament of time.*"

The reader is not to regard the description which I have taken from *The Dark Night of the Soul* as holding good universally in all its circumstances. The course of each soul is, in a sense, peculiar to itself. St John, however, may serve as a guide to the general features of this night. Let us now supplement his account from the experiences of others. His thoughts are those of the cloister. Let us go beyond the walls of this cloister into the open world under the sun and clouds of heaven.

Augustine traces similar pictures of spiritual discipline. "I strove towards Thee and was repulsed by Thee that I might taste death." "The disturbed and darkened vision of my mind was being healed from day to day by the keen

[1] *Dark Night of the Soul*, ii. 16. [2] *Ibid.*, ii. 24.

salve of wholesome pains. I became more wretched, and Thou nearer." [1]

Bunyan, with even fuller revelation of himself, describes his alternate gloom and confidence. "At another time, though just before I was pretty well and savoury in my spirit, yet suddenly there fell upon me a great cloud of darkness, which did so hide from me the things of God and Christ, that I was as if I had never known or seen them in my life. I was also so overrun in my soul with a senseless, heartless frame of spirit, that I could not feel my soul to move or stir after grace or life in Christ. I was as if my loins were broken, or as if my hands and feet had been tied or bound with chains. At this time I also felt some weakness to seize upon my outward man, which made the other affliction the more heavy and uncomfortable." [2] But as Bunyan recovers his more normal condition, all the old ideas begin to shine again ; the familiar words of Scripture with which he had perhaps wearied himself, regained their old force and even an added meaning. And so he speaks of his temptations to doubt or disregard certain doctrines being followed by a revelation of them.[3] He then goes on to claim the attainment of the mystical union which St John speaks of. "The Lord," he says, "did also lead me into the Mystery of Union with the Son of God ; that I was joined to Him,

[1] *Conf.*, iv. 15 ; vi. 16 ; vii. 8. [2] *Grace Abounding*, par. 261.
[3] *Ibid.*, par. 127.

that I was flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone." It is the business of the psychologist to translate such expressions as these from their figurate and pictorial form into a more universal one, and to mark off the intrinsic character of such experiences whatever be the view taken of their objective reference. For the present we must be content with a reference to p. 136, reserving further explanations for the chapter upon *Human and Divine Love.*

The discipline by which the soul is thrown back upon itself, has for its result one of the typical Christian virtues, *humility.* In its exaggeration, however, this very excellence can become one of the most noisome of faults. It is sometimes paraded as an excuse for that idleness which shrinks from the common responsibilities. The day of reckoning, again, which awaits low cunning, is turned aside sometimes by the nauseous pretence that well-deserved castigation is a trial sent by God. There are persons who presume on an affectation of piety to cheat their neighbours, and when discovered in the act, cast themselves for the part of the good man in distress. There are others for whom humility is simply an inverted pride. "I fell," says St Teresa, "into another extreme. I begged of God and made it a particular subject of prayer, that it might please His Majesty whenever anyone saw any good in me, that such a one might also become acquainted with my sins, in order

that He might see that His graces were bestowed on me without any merit on my part ; and I always greatly desired this. My confessor told me not to do it. But almost to this day if I saw that anyone thought well of me, I used, in a roundabout way or anyhow as I could, to contrive that he should know of my sins ; that seemed to relieve me. All these little fears and distresses and semblance of humility, I now see were imperfections ; for a soul left in the hands of God cares nothing for good or evil report." [1] Humility, then, does not consist in parading one's weakness. It turns upon the infinite contrast between the moral ideal and the actual state of the soul, and finds expression in a certain candid self-distrust. But such a quality taken alone is also equivalent to a paralysed will. Where, however, it is genuine, it does not come alone. The discipline which teaches how far the soul is to distrust itself, also discloses the extent of its powers, and consequently the extent to which it may trust itself. Humility, therefore, is only tolerable when it is found as the companion of positive excellences. Alone it is simply the masque of sloth ; and the disrepute into which religious orders fell in the sixteenth century was largely due to the cloak which they offered to the numerous class who shrink from all exertions.

But to some the candid self-estimate which humility involves only comes by way of rebound

[1] *Life*, xxxi. 17, 18.

from exaggerated confidence. And during the time that the soul is thus purging itself in self-contempt it falls into a contrary exaggeration. "Thou didst set me before my face," says Augustine, "that I might see how vile I was, how distorted and begrimed, how spotted and covered with sores."[1] Now at such times as these the soul has a right to seclude itself. For there is something unseemly in public self-humiliation, and the veil which hides the spirit's frailty ought seldom to be drawn. Yet sometimes the adoration in which common worship properly consists is replaced by public confessions in which the pathology of the soul is exposed to gratify a morbid curiosity.

But when in the ordinary occasions of life sparks of this virtue are struck out, the case is different. At such times humility passes into more or less exquisite irony, that is, when the self-judgment of a really excellent character is brought sharply up against the self-assertion which is the convention of daily life. "When a hot-headed young man called Vincent de Paul an old fool, the saint knelt down and asked his pardon for any occasion he might have given to call him so."[2]

Humility in this sense leads in the world of judgment to a detachment, in which things stand out in clear and accurate relations. "In the eyes of Infinite Wisdom," says St Teresa,

[1] Augustine, *Conf.*, viii. 7. [2] *Life*, by Wilson, 214.

"a little striving after humility and a single act thereof are worth more than all the science in the world. This is not the time for discussing, but for understanding plainly what we are, and presenting ourselves in simplicity before God, who will have the soul make itself as a fool."[1] The modesty which has characterised many of the greatest minds is this virtue in its intellectual application. Humility consists then in replacing a subjective by an objective point of view, and is the source of a certain grandeur and realism of manner in the conduct of life which may be compared to the manner of Velasquez in painting. The poor in spirit see truth clearly, and so the kingdom of heaven is theirs. When the shadow of self is expelled the judgment is illumined, and deals with more insight, both with the realm of perception and of practice. The detachment from self further produces a serenity which is of the utmost value in the transaction of business. Some one remarked of St Vincent de Paul, "At whatever time I went to him, though it was often very late and far into the night, or perhaps at other times when he was much occupied and engaged in business with others, he always received me with the same kindness, and answered me with a gentleness and charity which I cannot express."[2]

Perhaps the effect which detachment from self produces in the things of the mind, illustrates best

[1] *Life*, xv. 13. [2] *Life*, by Wilson, 212.

the dependence of the perception of truth upon the intention. Through the different phases of the moral life those truths disclose themselves which, in sum and in their systematic inter-connection, make up the content of the Christian revelation. Hence from time to time, as we study the Christian experience, we shall find ourselves on the verge of those positive statements of fact, which taken together form a creed.

There are some, however, who would hastily dismiss the whole subject of this chapter as belonging in reality to medicine, and would regard the variations of feeling which characterise the religious life as merely the symptoms of physical disorder. Let us recall a distinction which we have found necessary. We ought not to think of what is healthy and normal, even in physiology, as being confined within too narrow limits ; the plasticity of the human body is very great, and admits of large stresses in this or that direction, provided that the total strain does not go beyond a certain amount. If this were not so, the exertions in which genius expresses itself would be impossible. This consideration may be applied to those special cases in the life of the ordinary man which arise from time to time. Genius, then, and the crises of life, are in their degree so many plumblines let down through the abysses of human nature, so many victorious protests against the doctrine of the average —that refuge of sufferers from the incurably

commonplace. The variations of feeling are in a sense the pulse of the moral life, and when they cease that life ceases. And so we must not be misled by Burton, who, when he treats of Religious Melancholy, lumps together without due discernment the symptoms of health and disease. But even this is a less fault than that of regarding both under the one head of disease. It would be incredible if the book were not before my eyes, that any man pretending to some knowledge of human nature should group together St Francis of Assisi, Luther and Savonarola, as religious lunatics.[1]

At the same time, religious excitement acting upon certain constitutions is a fruitful source of insanity. But for this, the reader must be referred to the works of physicians. An attentive perusal of such works will justify the caution, and indeed alarm, which unregulated religious enthusiasm inspires among all thoughtful persons. Indeed, during the next two chapters we shall be moving on the borderline of insanity. The hallucinations of sight and hearing which we shall consider in the seventh chapter, are taken by some writers as conclusive proof of its presence ; and the intimate relation between religious and sexual emotion—to which the eighth chapter is partly devoted—comes to light specially in certain cases of mental disorder. But so far are the facts to which we shall refer from being symptoms of insanity, that they

[1] Lombroso, *Man of Genius*, 258-263.

are found for the most part amid quite normal conditions.

We will bring the present chapter to a close by considering a disorder of the emotions, which is, so to speak, directed upon the fellows of the subject and not upon himself; namely, cruelty, which is in a sense a kind of externalised melancholy. It first manifests itself as a kind of hardness and coldness in presence of the claims of natural ties and of friendship. We may explain this in part as a craving for solitude, and also as a feeling of shyness before others, which is a frequent and painful result of deep contemplation. There is a tenderness in such ties which melts the unnatural aloofness of asceticism, and so the ascetic is instinctively on his guard against what is a condemnation passed upon his mode of life. "Desire to be familiar only with God and His angels," says the author of the *Imitation*, "and fly the acquaintance of men."[1] "I was afraid of all company," said Fox, "for I saw them perfectly where they were, through the love of God which let me see myself."[2] And the watchful eye of St John of the Cross unmasks those friendships which, although contracted under spiritual pretexts, satisfy more simple human cravings. Hence the relief with which a lover of his kind, like Louis Stevenson, finds himself after the chill of the Trappist monastery in that brave world where, after all, he "was free to wander, free to hope, free to love."

[1] *Imitation of Christ*, i. 8. [2] *Journal*, 1647.

There is an intrinsic selfishness in certain forms of the religious temper which reveals itself unmercifully. Monica, for instance, so shrank from the early heresies of her son, that she was unwilling at first that he should live under the same roof with her and share the same table. It required a dream to reconcile her to Augustine's presence.[1] St Teresa says, "I have never been able to form friendship with, nor have any comfort in, nor any particular love for, any persons whatever, except those who, as I believe, love God and who try to serve Him."[2] When Bunyan was afflicted with the fears of his damnation, he used to wonder when he found "professors much distressed and cast down when they met with outward losses, as of husband, wife, child, etc. Lord, thought I, what ado is here about such little things as these! . . . I should account these but small afflictions, and should bear them as little burthens. A wounded spirit, who can bear?"[3] There is nothing more naïve in literature than that *etc.* of Bunyan's. Much has been said about the indifference of St Francis Borgia to his family ties. He scarcely reaches the ideal Bunyan lifts up. There is no doubt that we have here the mainspring of the persecuting spirit. If other men are only deserving of friendship so far as they conform to our own religious beliefs, it is almost inevitable that we should refuse toleration to those who disagree with us. Still less is it to be wondered at that strenuous spirits, nurtured

[1] *Conf.* iii. 11. [2] *Life*, xxiv. 8. [3] *Grace Abounding*, par. 85.

in the cloister, should carry the principle to its logical conclusion, and attempt to rid the world, even by violent means, of those who, being, as Wesley says,[1] "born in the image of the devil," can very well be spared. The Christian Church has had to learn the important lesson of toleration from the thinkers whom it has at the same time branded as heretics. With the exception of the Quakers—who, it must be said in fairness to the others, have not often had the power—there is no Christian body of importance which has not attempted to extend its own views, and to repress those of its opponents, by the use of violence. The Jesuit moralists were among the first professedly Christian thinkers to suggest reasonable grounds for the toleration of heretics. It is unfair, therefore, to them to dwell exclusively (as most controversialists have done) upon the evil consequences of their moral teaching. If they accommodated the rules of conduct too much to worldly maxims, they also learnt from the world some of that easy toleration of differences in opinion which is part of the "wisdom" of the world.[2]

[1] *Journal*, Sept. 13, 1739.
[2] Janet, *la Morale*, Book iii., c. iii.

CHAPTER VII

VOICES AND VISIONS

Visions and voices compatible with sanity—Fourfold stages of vision in Blake—Relation to fasting—Vision lower than intuition—Effect of solitude—Suggestion—Subjective character of visions and voices—Opening of the world of imagination—Reflection — Relation to passion — Objective validity, how tested.

ARE visions and voices perceived apart from the ordinary physical conditions compatible with sanity? As we have seen, there are many persons who answer this question offhand in the negative. As against such persons it will be sufficient to point out that hallucination is merely a matter of degree, and that everyone is subject to slight hallucinations of sight and hearing.

In the next place, it is to be noticed that the visions and voices with which we are to deal in this chapter, are not all of the character of hallucinations. They are not always projected upon the outer world, but seem rather to be ideas vividly presented to the mind in a visible or audible form. No one has drawn this distinction more emphatically than St Teresa. And first as to "divine locutions":—

"The words are very distinctly formed, but by the bodily ear they are not heard. They are, however, much more clearly understood than they would be if they were heard by the ear. It is impossible not to understand them, whatever resistance we may offer. When we wish not to hear anything in this world we can stop our ears or give attention to something else, so that if we do not hear, at least we can refuse to understand. In this locution of God addressed to the soul there is no escape, for in spite of ourselves we must listen." [1]

In like manner she marks off intellectual from ordinary vision. "I was once with a person,"—she says—"it was at the very beginning of my acquaintance with her—when our Lord was pleased to show me that these friendships were not good for me; to warn me also, and in my blindness which was so great, to give me life. Christ stood before me, stern and grave, giving me to understand what in my conduct was offensive to Him. I saw Him with the eyes of my soul more distinctly than I could have seen Him with the eyes of my body. The vision made so deep an impression on me that though it is more than twenty-six years ago, I seem to see Him present even now. I was greatly astonished and disturbed, and resolved not to see that person again. It did me much harm that I did not then know it was possible to see anything otherwise than with the eyes of the body." [2] Though

[1] *Life*, xxv. 2. [2] *Ibid.*, vii. 11.

the saint frequently had visions of angels, she saw them only by this intellectual vision, except on one occasion which she describes.[1] Blake held that ghosts did not appear much to imaginative men, but only to common minds who could not see the finer spirits. A ghost, he considered, was seen by the gross bodily eye, a vision by the mental eye. "I assert for myself," he said, "that I do not behold the outward creation, and that for me it is hindrance and not action. 'What!' it will be questioned, 'when the sun rises, do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a guinea?' 'Oh, no, no! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty!" I question not my corporeal eye any more than I would question a window concerning a sight. I look through it and not with it.'"[2] Of course there are differences between the visions and the voices which come to different persons, but cases like those of Blake and the Spanish nun justify us in affirming that the soul may enter into states other than the ordinary ones, and this without being the victims of hallucinations or the subject of insanity. At these times there is apparently an exalted perception of ideas such that the intuition of visible forms seems to replace the indirect and abstract reflection which is the more customary form of thought. It has been marked off as an unusual quality of

[1] *Life*, xxix. 16. [2] *Vision of the Last Judgment.*

Newton's genius that he was enabled to solve by the method of Euclid problems which lesser men had to undertake by analytical geometry. He thus furnishes a close parallel to that part of poetic inspiration with which we are now dealing, and which Mill described so well when he contrasted himself with Carlyle, as the *thinker* with the *seer*. More than this; there is reason to believe that poetic vision is more congenial to the unspoilt human being than abstract reflection. The soul wanders away from the visions of Eden and is disciplined in the wilderness, but it does not rest until it has returned again to its home and is surrounded by the imagery of the heavenly courts. Mr Yeats speaks of a little company of Irish mystics who cultivate the power of vision at the present time. They "have taught for some years a religious philosophy which has changed many ordinary people into ecstatics and visionaries. Young men who were, I think, apprentices and clerks, have told me how they lay awake at night hearing miraculous music, or seeing forms that made the most beautiful painted or marble forms seem dead and shadowy."[1] I have had but one visionary experience as far as I remember, and that of a very simple character. Before falling to sleep one night, the illuminated spaces which can be seen in the field of vision when the eyes are closed, changed into an exquisite succession of kaleidoscopic patterns, re-

[1] *Dome*, N.S., vol. i. 233.

peated over a surface like the pattern of an Oriental rug, or of draperies in fine stained glass. What struck me most was the regularity with which the patterns were repeated. But this, like the visions of Mr Yeats' friends, is of a simple order. While St Teresa marks off intellectual vision from that of the bodily eye, Blake multiplies the stages of vision from two into four. In his supreme moments he seems to enjoy a fourfold vision, each stage including the one below it. In the following lines Newton is used to denote the relation of the commonsense world to its experience :—[1]

> "*Now I a fourfold vision see*
> *And a fourfold vision is given to me.*
> *Tis fourfold in my supreme delight,*
> *And threefold in soft Beulah's night,*
> *And twofold always. May God us keep*
> *From single vision and Newton's sleep!*"

Perhaps, then, it will be well if we lay aside for a time the indulgent contempt with which visionary experiences are usually greeted. As we have seen, the gates of paradise may perhaps be closed to us, unless the tendency of human beings to eat too much is counterbalanced by periods in which the digestion may recover its normal condition. Too much indeed has been said about the painful char-

[1] I may remind the reader of the distinction already drawn between the methods of physical science and that of a psychologist, and also of Schopenhauer's distinction between the spheres of natural science and of morals—a distinction drawn in his essay on *The Fourfold Root of the Sufficient Reason.*

acter of ascetic practices. Listen to Robert Louis Stevenson as he speaks of the monastery of *Our Lady of the Snows*: "Without doubt the most of mankind overeat themselves; our meals serve not only for support, but as a hearty and natural diversion from the labour of life. Yet, though excess may be hurtful, I should have thought this Trappist regimen defective. And I am astonished, as I look back, at the freshness of face and cheerfulness of manner of all whom I beheld. A happier nor a healthier company I should scarce suppose that I have ever seen. They seemed all firm of flesh and high in colour; and the only morbid sign that I could observe, an unusual brilliancy of eye, was one that served rather to increase the general impression of vivacity and strength."[1] On this side at least there is then no antecedent presumption against the normal character—I do not say the average character—of mystical experiences. A man is not necessarily the victim of a monomania because he is temperate! And we have seen that in themselves the experiences of the visionary do not bear the character of disorder. And so we will leave this topic with the quotation from Dr Tylor: "The opening of the refectory door must many a time have closed the gate of heaven to the ascetic's gaze."

But if we have to defend the visionary life from the comparative method of the anthro-

[1] *Journey through the Cevennes*, 97.

pologist as something with a well-marked character of its own, we are also bound to join Blake in distinguishing it from the power of seeing ghosts. There is a wide chasm, indeed, between the intuitive imagination of the seer, and the phantasms which come by fits and starts to those who, as Blake says, are bound down to single vision. The true visionary sees too many ghosts to believe in them in the vulgar sense. The experiences of the spiritualist do not interest us, except in so far as they bear a meaning, a test which is usually fatal to them.

Yet the visionary experience has to yield to a something higher. "The Hebrews were aware that the vision, in which spiritual truth is clothed in forms derived from the sphere of the outer senses, is not the highest form of revelation."[1] We shall consider this point in a later chapter (p. 231).

Visions and voices come specially to the solitary. When Jesus retires into the desert He is confronted with an evil spirit in a visible shape. Even amid the conditions of modern life, however, it is not necessary to go out into the desert or into the cloister to gain some of the solitude for which the soul craves at times. "There is only one absolute solitude attainable, and that little infinite world we call the heart, may be carried silent and remote as well among indifferent throngs and the maze of the infinitesimal and unimportant, as beside still waters in woods,

[1] Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel* (1895 ed.), 220.

among the solitudes of the hills, under the stars."[1] Perhaps one of the reasons why in popular religion so little is said nowadays about these experiences, is that religious exercises are mainly of a public character. There is little encouragement of the practice of meditation. Even the reading of the Bible is, after all, a check upon religious advance, unless it is accompanied by reflection and aspiration;[2] and so although the use of a crucifix and of the images of sacred personages and events is to be sternly questioned, nay, condemned, so far as it replaces the reading of the Bible, yet the harm is not wholly upon one side. Those persons (of whom there are many) who cannot penetrate through the written word to the idea conveyed, find in pictorial representations the starting point for reverie and day-dreams. Even undisciplined souls can break loose in this way from the grinding monotony of the commonplace into another world; and this world takes shape and colour and utterance, especially for the solitary. In this use of pictures the most ignorant and the most educated are at one. The paintings which summarise the ideas of a religious society, and the methods of a school of painters, are capable of giving a pleasurable impulse to the thoughts, which is strangely misunderstood by the half-educated. If what has been advanced about visions is true, the use of religious art becomes indispensable for the full expression

[1] Fiona Macleod, *Dome*, N.S., ii. 208. [2] Peter ii. 3, 16.

of the soul. For it is maintained by some that the visions and voices with which we are dealing are in reality echoes of previous experiences. If so, it is surely important that the mind should be led to dwell upon beautiful and pathetic forms and sounds, so that in its musings it may be attended by objects of beauty and charm. In this respect the middle ages were more fortunate than the present. The ornaments of churches were the embodiment of a whole system of legends and symbolic fancies, and the popular mind found already to hand a rich treasure house of poetic inspiration. This, instead of contradicting the spirit of the Bible, was for the most part a helpful vestibule to divine truth, as the sculptured portals of Chartres lead to the sanctuary within. Left to itself the soul is unequal to the creation of a complete world; unless it can share in the pictorial tradition, invention flags and a few forms are harped upon in a morbid manner. It is the same with voices. Unless the verbal memory is well-stored and preferences are cultivated, a few hackneyed phrases haunt the mind and weary it. Blake could not defy the tradition of poetry and design with impunity. The freshness of his early lyrics is overcast by the uncouth and cumbersome system into which he forced his later inspirations, and the weirdness of the illustrations to his *prophetic books* has to be attained in spite of a certain repetition of one or two motives. In this particular we can compare Blake instructively with one or

two others. He resembles Bunyan, whose mind, as we are told, was possessed by one or two impressive texts from time to time. But when we set Blake's autobiographical poems, such as *Jerusalem* and *Milton*, over against the *Pilgrim's Progress*, we feel that from the artistic standpoint Bunyan is at a great advantage, in that he criticises his own ideas in the light of the Bible. The high literary excellence of the *authorised version*—if Blake had been susceptible to it—might perhaps have saved him from the extravagances into which he fell. Unfortunately he directed his attention to those books of the Bible which are the least formal in their treatment, the prophetic books of the *Old Testament*, and the *Revelation* in the *New*. While the simplicity and directness of Oriental narrative is faithfully reflected by Bunyan in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, we may fairly regret that Blake did not submit to that self-judgment which is an indispensable preliminary to artistic creation on a large scale. He regarded his ideas as communicated to him by a direct inspiration, such that it would be blasphemous to modify the shape in which they were expressed. His latest biographers affirm that "a trance-like absorption of his whole nature accompanied his finest writing, a mood from which he returned to the ordinary conversation of life as a man from another land. Feeling this keenly, he could not but attribute the authorship of his life's work to influences which his ordinary *self* did not contain." [1]

[1] Ellis and Yeats, i. 89.

It is the reward of the study of Blake that his autobiographical poems reveal a spiritual progress and pilgrimage glittering through the mist of vision and symbol in which they are entangled. St Teresa also is fortunate compared with Blake in that the voices she heard expressed themselves in well-constructed and poetic sentences, a circumstance, doubtless, which may be explained from the saint's familiarity with the dignified language of the Roman service books. Her visions, again, reflect the forms she was familiar with in paintings; "on one of the feasts of St Paul, when I was at mass, there stood before me the most Sacred Humanity, as painters represent Him after the resurrection."[1] And a certain gloominess which characterises some of her visions seems to be connected with the manner of the Spanish school. The subjective character of such visions and voices is emphasised by the bishop of Durham. "It is not to be supposed that even Moses saw the heavenly things as they are. He saw them as he had the power to see, *i.e.* according to human apprehension. So St Paul heard the divine voice in Hebrew."[2] In other words, truth is always disclosed to the individual under the forms proper to his experience. Hence it is possible to draw inferences from the visions of a prophet to his surroundings and career, just as the similes of a poet tell their story about him.

[1] *Life*, xxviii. 4. [2] *Commentary upon Epistle to the Hebrews*, 216.

There is a close likeness between the solitude which is craved by the student, and that of one who is engaged in religious meditation. So far, in fact, is such solitude from being unnatural, that it seems to be a condition of certain degrees and operations of thought. In solitude the concentration of thought is rendered more easy by withdrawal from the more noisy effects of the ordinary surroundings. As the outer world thus grows dim, the inner world begins to glow and tremble, until our very ideas take form and colour and utterance. Now the world of ideas is not a chaos; it is an organised sphere which strives after a being and unity of its own; it is the mode in which the oversoul asserts itself. And although the visions and voices which come to the solitary are of a lower degree than the rational inspiration of the true prophet, they are an improvement on the impulses which come directly from our surroundings, considered, that is, as motives and guides to action.[1] It is in this sense that we are to interpret Tertullian when he says, "Perhaps the majority of men learn to know God from visions."[2]

Yet it would be a mistake to refer visions and voices solely to the effects of solitude. As we have already seen, the presence of a large number of human beings together in one place produces certain physical effects, among which is a certain tendency to receive suggestions. Hence, if one

[1] *Mind*, N.S., vi. 189. [2] *De anima*, 47.

person in a company sees a vision or hears a voice, it is very probable that others will do so too. "As Polycarp entered into the stadium, a voice came to him from heaven, 'Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man.' And no one saw the speaker, but those of our people who were present heard the voice." [1] In bringing forward this instance I do not mean to say that suggestion and imitation exhaust the meaning of such occurrences. It may be that the mere external likeness of the experience to which these terms offer an explanation, is conditioned by processes imperfectly understood at present, and that suggestion and imitation, instead of denoting the *cause*, simply point to the *occasion*, of such experiences. And if the presence of a multitude is sometimes a predisposing cause to the reception of such impressions, it is also no insuperable obstacle to the voices and visions that come to an individual alone. When St Catharine of Siena accompanied Niccolò Tuldo to execution, she was so exalted in spirit that she had a vision. "Then," she says, "the God-man appeared as though one were looking upon the sun's brightness, and stood plainly there and received the blood; in his blood a fire of holy longing, given and kept hid in his soul through grace." [2] Such an example as this beautifully illustrates Blake's theory of double and treble vision. "The worlds

[1] *Letter of Smyrnæans*, 9.

[2] Symonds, *Renaissance*, new ed., iv. 151.

of loving service and illumination," to use Symonds' phrase, interpenetrate. And the solitude, or again, the social excitement in which the inner worlds were opened for the first time, are not necessary afterwards for their apprehension.

The reader is now in a position to estimate the effect of the visible representations of the Passion upon an excited multitude. Fra Roberto da Lecce was preaching in Perugia in 1448. On Good Friday, the friar assembled all the citizens and preached; and when the moment came for the elevation of the crucifix, "there issued forth from San Lorenzo, Eliseo di Cristoforo, a barber of the quarter of St Angelo, like a naked Christ with the cross upon his shoulder and the crown of thorns upon his head, and his flesh seemed to be bruised as when Christ was scourged. The people were immensely moved by this sight. They groaned and cried out *misericordia*, and many monks were made upon the spot."[1] The same minds that could treat such representations as if they were real, would also be not unlikely to attribute a certain degree of reality to the stirrings which issue in hallucination. For it is to be observed that the tendency to act upon a mental image intensifies it. This circumstance is regarded by those instructors who advise persons who are troubled by doubts, to act *as if* they were not troubled by them. But, after all, this is merely to touch the surface of the soul. We have here at the best but

[1] Symonds, *Renaissance*, i. 479.

double vision, but the first step taken from the commonplace, and the emotions that go no further than this pass away without effect, like the ruffling of the ocean by a chance breeze. The Italian preachers worked mainly upon the imagination of their audiences, or rather upon their phantasy. (We will keep *imagination* for a nobler sense.) The mere pictorial representation of the life of Jesus, unless it is suffused with moral ideas, has no permanent effect upon the soul. Surprise is often expressed that external devotion has been so often found conjoined with downright villainy. So long as devotion merely affects the senses through exterior practices and objects, and declines to go further, the will, or—if the use of this term is objected to—the centre of the soul remains unaffected. It is interesting that this fact should be very clearly exhibited in the life of Benvenuto Cellini. He found himself no less at home in the religion of his time than in the murders and excesses with which his *Autobiography* is crowded. There seemed no contrast for him between religious practices and acts of violence. When he was imprisoned in St Angelo, he was visited by good angels, until, as he says, "I proceeded to reckon in my own case upon God's assistance, both because of His divine power and mercy, and also because of my own innocence; and at all hours, sometimes in prayer and sometimes in communion with God, I abode in these high thoughts of Him. There flowed into my soul so powerful a delight

from these reflections upon God, that I took no further thought for all the anguish I had suffered, but rather spent the day in singing psalms and divers other compositions on the theme of His divinity."[1] At the same time we must remember that, in the absence of police, Cellini's contemporaries fought to some extent, each for his own hand, and that such murders done in revenge would lie no heavier on their consciences than the killing of an opponent on the field of battle by a soldier, or the execution of a murderer on the consciences of those engaged in the deed. Hence the assassin of Lorenzino de' Medici, as he ran drenched with blood through Venice after the event, could take refuge in a church and fervently commend himself to the Divine protection.[2]

The noblest kind of vision is that which is accompanied by an effort of the *reason*. As we have just seen, the sensuous realisation of divine truth is very partial and imperfect. There is, as St John of the Cross points out, a double process of purification; first the night of the senses and then of the spirit. And anyone who merely passes through the first stage is, like Cellini, incapable of grasping the most obvious moral distinctions when they happen to fall outside his private code of honour. Isolated words and visions therefore acquire importance so far as they are connected with dominating *ideas*. For some, the Bible furnishes the objective test which they apply

[1] Symonds, Translation, p. 238. [2] *ib.* pref. xvii.

to such events: "That which purports to come from God is received only in so far as it corresponds with the sacred writings; but if it varies therefrom ever so little, I am incomparably more convinced that it comes from Satan than I am convinced it comes from God, however deep that conviction may be. In this case there is no need to ask for signs, nor from what spirit it proceeds, because this varying is so clear a sign of the devil's presence, that if all the world were to assure me that it came from God I would not believe it."[1] Blake, on the other hand, is an example of the harm which may come from hearing voices, and seeing visions, without applying to them any discriminating test. His inspirations and visions ceased to have meaning; and it is worthy of note that the finest work of his later years, *The Illustrations to the Book of Job*, was produced with the thoughts and images of another mind to hold him in check, and, in this sense, was not the offspring of the purest invention. There is a manner of vision at once more abundant than that of the Spanish saint, and more self-determined than that of Blake, in which the visionary power moves towards the execution of a great architectonic idea, where the visions are summoned like spirits from the vasty deep at the will of a sovereign imagination, and image forth ideal objects with that mixture of the sensuous and rational which is not only the germinal notion of the Christian religion,

[1] Teresa, *Life*, xxv. 17.

but also the form in which poetic creation is found at its highest. It is interesting to trace the gradual advance of the prophets of the *Old Testament* towards this manner. At first there are the isolated visions of an Isaiah, or the succession of disconnected pictures in which the thought of Zechariah expressed itself. But later the prophetic imagination begins to take a wider sweep and constructs the world of the Son of Man, and so lays down some of the lines upon which the author of *Revelation* was to raise his City of God. In genuine inspiration, however, the vision comes as it were with overflowing hands, and more than suffices the formal requirements of thought ; for it ripples over into superfluities of detail, like the exquisitely painted texture of the garments in a picture by Veronese. On the other hand, a poverty-stricken fancy can scarcely attain to the merest outline, and leaves its thought a vanishing allegory. The divine breath that once made ideas so living that they seemed to have hands and feet, ceases ; and the deserted soul half mechanically continues to wreathe itself about with shadowy phantoms—desiccated skeletons—of thought, which are only handed down because they satisfy a craving that owed its rise to more living works. The book of Daniel is followed by the book of Enoch, and the *Apocalypse* of John by the *Shepherd* of Hermas.

The transition from hallucination to inspired vision is marked by the use of symbolism. This will occupy us in the next chapter (p. 175).

The fulness of the visionary experience depends largely upon the passions of the soul. Without passionate feelings, thought as well as impulse fades away, and the quiet of the feelings is sometimes only purchased at the cost of the cessation of thought. The aspirations in which the soul is attracted to its objects determine both the intensity with which the soul directs itself upon them, and the quarter also towards which it is to turn. Only so far as love fixing itself upon its goal spreads therefrom and annexes to its sovereignty the neighbouring spheres, is inspiration possible. And so there is a very close correspondence between the course of human affection generally and the course of the aspiration of the soul towards divine things. This is the original endowment of the soul; its love. The colour taken by its experiences is borrowed from that which is without; a soul's love is its own.

What guarantee is there, you may ask, against the most arbitrary claims to inspiration? I reply by another question: how have such arbitrary claims been dealt with in the past? They are brought to the bar of an illuminated mind. By the widespread, if not universal consent of the most powerful and enlightened races, there are certain examples which furnish, so to speak, a touchstone of feeling; and as a matter of fact these examples may be summarised for us in the attitude and temper of Jesus. Some have attempted to use the life and death of Jesus as a positive limita-

tion to the soul's domain, as though nothing were to be accepted which was not already included in that supreme example. But this has never been affirmed or indeed admitted by the most sympathetic exponents of that life. If we put the rule in another form, and say that every experience is valid which does not positively conflict with the meaning of that life, we shall be guarded against those theologians who claim to confine the free action of the human spirit. In the next chapter [p. 177] we shall see how the spirit of Jesus leaves room for the poetic apprehension of the world in the Christian scheme. Yet in a sense He may claim to have embraced this in Himself in a special manner. Sufficient justice has not always been done to Jesus as poet, that is to say, to His use of life in order to bring out what is truly individual, and at the same time universal, in it. The true poet affirms; and in the light of his affirmation what is unreal is found to lose courage and to slink away, like the accusers of the woman taken in adultery. And so there is really no need for fear lest the insistence upon these principles which Jesus embodied in His earthly career should contract the liberty of the painter and the poet. Of course Jesus belonged to another race than ours, and it is difficult always to allow for racial differences. But I think it might fairly be maintained, as a proposition to be dealt with purely on literary grounds, that

His influence is really more universal than the genius of Shakespeare,—I mean universal in the sense of including every aspect of truth. In fact, as against the classical world Christianity has created the individual, that is to say, one who is more than the citizen of the ancient state, more than a particular in a whole; and so Jesus may claim that He made possible the course which was taken by the genius of the greatest romantic poet. The sympathies of Jesus were not less realistic than those of Shakespeare. He sought life out through its least guarded forms, in the market, the street and the tavern, in such a way as to offend His more rigid contemporaries; and He detected even in the lowest of the low a spark of the divine. Against Him the life of His time grouped itself in the most sublime and tragic contrasts, and furnished the prophetic fulfilment of Aristotle's famous maxim, in that the most critical event in history was also the most tragic. Those, therefore, have been at war with the religion of the cross who have measured its bounds by their own preferences, and defined the Love of God by their own ignorance. The City of God is inconceivable without the poet and the discoverer.

CHAPTER VIII

HUMAN AND DIVINE LOVE

Religion as controlling emotion—As sustaining emotion by stable sentiments—As affording it an outlet—As diffusing it—Symbolism—Artistic invention—Feeling and intensity of vision—Unity of feeling—Use of *Canticles*—The religious vocation—Friendship—Heroic temper demanded—The unconscious love of God—Impartiality demanded—Family love—The worship of the Virgin—Saint and woman — Bunyan — Erasmus and Jowett—Wesley—Whitefield—Intimacy of God—The absolute companion—Wordsworth—Jesus and poetic truth—Prayer—Feeling reciprocated by God.

IT might fairly be said that one of the main offices of religion was to introduce order into the affections, not by repressing them, but by assigning their limits and affording them also an additional and appropriate outlet. "It is," as Joubert says, "the poetry of the heart." The practices which attach specially to the Christian religion may be ranged, then, under two heads, first, as producing certain feelings; second, as affording relief to other feelings.

Through suggestion in its various forms, and notably by conscious imitation, a certain tone of feeling is gradually diffused through the religious

society, and acts unconsciously also upon those who are formally outside the pale of the religious sentiment. But it not only produces a certain tone of feeling by affording outlet for corresponding activities; the feelings in question are both deepened and strengthened. For unless feeling thus gains touch with practice, it quickly fades away. But even this is far from being the whole of the truth. All serious religious revivals within the Christian world have attempted to do thus much. The great mediæval Italian preachers set in movement currents of repentance and works of charity, and took in hand the remedy of the most glaring abuses, but their influence passed away and left scarcely a mark upon the national life.[1] And they failed for this reason; they set no fresh current of *thought* in motion. But unless this is done, unless emotion is spiritualised by its association with large and profound ideals, it degenerates into the merest beating of the air, as aimless as the gyrations of dervishes. It is only in so far as our experience is systematised that the life of emotion passes into the more stable form of sentiment. "Emotions," a recent writer points out, "are in a sense adjectival, and tend to qualify a more stable feeling. Whereas the specific organisation of our sentiments—affection for our friends, the home sentiment, and every sentiment that we can use the term 'love' to express, as love of knowledge, art, goodness,

[1] Symonds, *Renaissance*, i. 485.

love of comfort, and all our interests, as interest in our health, fortune and profession, interest in books, collections, self-interest—these, so far from being mere adjectives and qualifying other feelings, are the relatively stable centres to which the first attach themselves, the substantives of those adjectives, the complex wholes which contain in their possible life-history the entire gamut of the emotions." [1]

Now the articulation of the emotions is not a process that can be left to itself. With that optimism which is one of the most subtle forms of the psychological fallacy, the same writer remarks that the emotions tend always to build themselves into more stable and complex feelings, " and these are the sentiments, which in their turn become the centres of attachment of the organised emotions." On the contrary, I think it is truer to say that the emotions which are knit together are continually tending towards dissolution. The influence of authority and tradition, on the one hand, and effort towards certain ends on the other, are the constructive factors in the emotional life; but they are sometimes overbalanced by destructive factors, notably the deadening effect of custom which continually tends towards producing a moral gangrene. The doctrine of sin, therefore, is a truer criticism of life than the easy promises of moral advance which are offered by the descriptive

[1] Shand, *Mind*, N.S. 18, 218.

psychologist. The religious experience is thus a corrective of our other experience. Only by a continual effort towards the ideal can the soul maintain itself in possession of the religious sentiment. Much indeed of the religious life is explicable as the degeneration and dissolution of the sentiments when this effort is relaxed. The excesses which sometimes accompany religious excitement, and the revulsion which follows it are instances of this disintegration of sentiment, this putrefaction of the moral fibre. Divine truth, therefore, is like the spirit brooding over the waters, which are the symbol of the senses, and forever creating therefrom a firmament anew.

Not only does religion control emotion, bringing it into relation with truth and organising it; religion also furnishes an outlet for it. "The celebrated shrines of Europe—Rome, Compostella, Monte Gargano, Canterbury—acted like lightning conductors to the tempestuous devotion of the mediæval races."[1] For the more quiet and ordered forms of devotion fail sometimes to relieve sufficiently the pent-up emotions of many natures, and an artificial relief is found in more extravagant outbursts, such as those already described in the fifth chapter.

The reader is now, perhaps, in a position to understand why religious excitement should lead to those very excesses which it is one of the main offices of religion to control. Religion does not

[1] Symonds, *Renaissance*, i. 473.

repress the feelings; it reduces them to order, and brings them to what is a more or less unstable equilibrium. Hence if excitement reaches a certain pitch, this equilibrium is destroyed; the contending impulses are no longer held in check; and in their isolation they exhibit the worst forms of license. Those raptures and ecstasies which occupied us in the fifth chapter are like storms upon the ocean of the senses, storms in which the foundations of the deep are in danger of being upheaved. Unless, therefore, along with its power to thrill, religious teaching brings with it also a power to calm and to control, it is a source of moral danger.

It is one of the services of the fine arts to religion, that they select just those aspects of sensible and transient things which can best convey the eternal and ideal, and so the feelings which direct themselves upon what is sensible are tuned also to the more permanent harmonies. Now since the feelings are most intimately bound up with —if indeed they are not sometimes identical with —the reverberations produced in the soul by external impressions, it is obvious that the surroundings of worship are inevitably a school of emotion and also of taste. We have learnt to distinguish between the more permanent sentiment and the passing emotion, so that we shall not be afraid of raising the ministry of art to too lofty a place by saying that it gives form to *emotion*, that is to say, it moulds the material which is to be built up into

the abiding life of the soul. And what Joubert remarks of the Roman ceremonial is also true in their kinds for other orders of religious worship; "it bends the soul to courtesy."

When the emotional life is directed towards an object, it tends to be diffused at the same time upon that which surrounds its object. And while, in one sense, emotion marks out the lines which our thoughts are to take, at the same time it moves and diffuses itself along the lines which thought has already taken. In this manner, emotion conquers fresh realms for itself. In this process, further, emotion finds in the use of symbols one of its most efficient engines. Instead of remaining confined within the most obvious sources of emotional impulses, the soul spreads its sails to catch the finer breezes of things, and so is swept down the mysterious tides of the senses to unexplored islands of the spirit. In this way a life which, at first sight, seems only to tantalise the soul with its promise of interest, is made to surrender, by a strange alchemy, the glittering metal which is hid in its clay.

But it is only so far as the life of emotion is purified and regulated that the soul can enrich itself from these new fields. It is no reply to this, to point to the disorderly lives of many artists. In the first place, the artist has to put himself under the severest discipline; and in the second place, it is not certain that their life is, in reality, more disorderly than the life of their more commonplace

contemporaries. In fact, the very vision which is enjoyed by the great artist is in itself a token of nobility of soul, so that there is some justification for those who are inclined to condone the irregular lives of some artists by reference to their character in its fulness. The pioneer is to be judged by a standard other than that which we apply to those who tread along the path he has struck out. At the same time, there is not much need for this charity, which is perhaps after all an impertinence. The greatest artists of Italy, in the sixteenth century, were not far from being also the best representatives of her moral life. Cellini is not the type by which we are to measure his fellow-craftsmen. There is, moreover, a certain innate dignity which attaches to handicraft. Only so far as a man works with his hands as well as with his brain, can he continue his labours without risk to his health, physical and moral; and under the present conditions of industrial life, the artist is almost the only workman who can, without reserve, set himself to do his best. Hence it would seem that a painter or sculptor has something in his favour, even from our present point of view.

Richness of emotional life determines the intensity of that vision with which we were occupied in the last chapter. It is thus one of the main conditions of inspiration; others being the clearness of discrimination and the power of combining by which the soul's buildings are wrought out.

Now of these factors the passion is found in the early years of life ; the insight, in the later years. In this way each age of life has after all its appropriate share of poetic endowment. Since *the ruins of time build mansions in eternity*, the heritage of passion in which youth seems to spend itself, can be so husbanded as to suffice for later needs.

But rich as that heritage is, not only can it be squandered—a topic on which moralists have said more than enough—it can also be hoarded like fairy gold, until the morning comes and the gold is found to be changed into withered leaves. The coward who shrinks from following his deepest impulses defrauds himself, and he is just as much bankrupt at the last as the reckless spirit who has ridden his coursers to the world's end.

Symbolism, then, by furnishing new objects for the emotions increases their volume, and the most powerful symbols will be those which are drawn from the most moving experiences. Not only so, through the symbol and the emotion together, the soul makes an advance in thought. For the soul which has begun to reflect on the ultimate truths of life, seems at first incapable of giving shape to its thoughts, or, at least, it gives them an inadequate shape. When, however, under the guise of symbol a whole range of emotion is suggested to it, the soul creates an object for itself from these emotional stirrings, and projects

it outwards on to reality. The very dimness with which alone such an object can be presented to the mind, is conformable to the limitations under which God is apprehended. He can be thought of as the object of desire, and of aspiration, and can so be loved; and this without falling into an illusory definiteness of idea. Symbol, then, which professedly does not represent its object but something else, through which appropriate feelings are to be suggested, rises to its height when, as in the traditional interpretation of *The Song of Songs*, the language of the most ardent human passion is employed to figure the ardour of the soul towards God.

Again, ordinary human affection craves for objects on which it may spend itself, and this quite apart from any thought of immediate self-satisfaction in the narrower sense.[1] And where it lacks sufficient scope in the usual relationships of life, it is ready to direct itself upon other interests, and in this manner to give increased richness and variety to the common life of which it is a participant. It has already been noticed that the vast size of the modern state admits to an unusual degree of the specialised activities of individuals. There is room for the visionary and the artist, the metaphysician and the discoverer, as well as the rank and file of the human army. And so from a right point of view such individuals are not to be regarded as abnormal, but rather as

[1] Mackenzie, *Ethics*,[3] 97.

the organs of certain highly specialised functions. Such men fulfil their part largely by turning those desires which guide the rest of mankind to the ordinary goods of life, upon special objects of desire. Hence such lives, even those of the cloister, are not fairly to be compared with the ordinary life, as though they were in any serious sense distorted or mutilated.[1] They are literally inspired, in that they move upon certain objects by a kind of natural summons, a vocation which consists in their special powers.

It may seem a somewhat bold assumption that the mode in which the soul directs itself upon its object is the same in kind whether that object is a material possession, a person, or an ideal. This is the assumption which underlies symbolism, and is only strange when we lose sight of the intrinsic unity of the mental process. In reality the desire of the soul moves from one object to another in an ascending scale, or rather is capable of so doing, until it is at last turned upon the supreme object of desire with the cry of St Augustine: "Too late have I loved Thee, O beauty so old and so new, too late have I loved Thee."[2] "For this is the right way to the objects of love," says Plato, "beginning from these beautiful things, ever to go forward for the sake of yonder beauty, using them as stepping-stones from one to two and from two to all beautiful

[1] Mackenzie, *Ethics*,[3] 363, who marks the limits of this principle.
[2] *Conf.* x. 27.

forms, and from beautiful forms to beautiful actions, and from beautiful actions to beautiful doctrines, until from them it comes to that doctrine which is the doctrine of nothing else than of yonder beauty, and at the last should know the true beauty."[1] And so there is something profoundly philosophical in the use of *The Song of Songs* to typify the communion of the soul with its ideal. The passion which is expressed by the Shulamite for her earthly lover in such glowing phrases becomes the type of the love of the soul towards God; while the blandishments of worldly ideals are represented by Solomon, who is unable to detach the heart of the girl from her shepherd.[2] And in their degree other human relationships are a school of affection by which the soul is drawn out of itself and so fitted for the love of God.

For the human will is something which is for ever going beyond itself. When desire ceases, life ceases too. This is merely another aspect of the emotion which for ever wells up in the soul. And so it is a fruitless inquiry whether there is any state in which the will is entirely satisfied; for if it were satisfied it would cease to be. But in all its stages we can distinguish between the will that remains conscious of itself and that which is lost in its object. In intellectual pursuits the self-conscious will finds its realisation in culture; the will that loses itself in its object becomes the

[1] *Symposium*, 211. [2] Driver, *Introduction O.T.*,[3] 424.

discoverer and the thinker. So in religion, the self-conscious will is determined upon its own salvation ; the will which is directed solely upon its object is lost in adoration of the supreme ideal and forgets itself. Only those souls which can lose themselves in this way really attain to the highest reaches of the religious life and touch the heroic.

One of the reasons why popular religion in England seems to be coming to the limits of its power, is that it has contented itself so largely with the commonplace motives which, after all, find sufficient exercise in the ordinary duties of life. Unless God is presented under the attributes of the divine majesty, in such a way as to summon forth a heroic effort of the soul to come to its own in Him, religion is degraded to a level below the ordinary standards of honour, and does not appeal to the high spirit which is the natural temper of a free citizen in a free state. When religion is represented as the most refined way of providing for the ultimate future, and a not unprofitable investment for the present, it is classed on its own showing with the business pursuits, which even those who are engaged in them treat, not as ends in themselves, but as means. Yet, unless the divine ideal is presented as an object of desire in and for itself, because of its intrinsic beauty and authority, it is no longer completely effective. The God of Calvin may have been an ideal which was effective in producing a moral renovation, but it is

permitted to doubt whether such an ideal ever inspired that disinterested passion of love, which is the highest form of the soul's communion with God. "He moves the world," says Aristotle, "as the object of its desire."

There is some reason then for the suspicion with which the world sometimes looks upon the motives of professedly religious people. A man who regards the inner life and revelation of God as merely the means to his own future wellbeing, is scarcely likely to be more respectful to the claims of friendship, and will see in his friends so many tools to be used for a time and then laid aside. On the other hand, when the love of God consists in the irresistible attraction of the soul by the divine beauty, a similar disinterestedness is diffused upon the various relations of life. It is no longer hypocritical to speak of friendship as illumined by the love of God, or to declare that true friendship is that "which is assured by God among those who cling to Him in the love which is spread abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit."[1] In fact, therefore, a man who loves his friends with this disinterested love, and is even at the same time insensible to the love of God, is nearer to the life of the spirit than the man who loves God with the afterthought that, on the whole, he is doing a prudent thing. But this does not exhaust this truth. One who loves his friends with this disinterested love is at the same time a participant,

[1] Aug., *Conf.* iv. 4.

though an unconscious one, in the love of God, and is a Christian without knowing it. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he would lay down his life for his friends." And the quality of friendship is not often so poor among men of the English race that it will not meet this test. The colliers, who are branded sufficiently for the superficial observer by the noisy way in which some of them spend their hours of recreation, furnish every year a tribute of heroes who readily sacrifice their life in the work of rescue, and thus vindicate their citizenship of the celestial kingdom. At these times the heart victoriously beats its way through theological cobwebs and declares to itself, without fear of contradiction, that such men are safe in the hands of God. We must not be told that this is a merely emotional view of such acts. There must be a reason for this assurance, and we must fit it into our system, if we have one. Is it not because at such supreme moments, the human soul is actually one with the divine will, not only in intention but in act? The saints have always been great lovers. And great lovers have been saints. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen."

I have spent some time upon the relation of friendship to the Christian life, because this topic is usually passed over, or confused with the relation of the Christian to his fellows in the religious society to which he belongs. Now, under ordinary circumstances, it is dangerous to claim any considera-

tion for professedly Christian persons, which is not at the same time conceded to those who make no such profession. In other words, the Christian profession gives no rights beyond those which are due to a common humanity. People are afraid to look this obvious and important principle in the face; but it is only thus that we can guarantee toleration and justice to every one even in a professedly Christian community. There is a certain morbid tendency towards persecution in some religious minds, and so those religious societies which treat the Christian profession as a ground for differential treatment, are not only likely to be intolerant and unjust,[1] but they also encourage hypocrisy in those persons who are inclined to that odious vice, and who make use of it to trade upon the prejudices of their neighbours. The only privilege enjoyed by the professedly religious person is that he is called upon to be more ready than others for acts of self-sacrifice. Nor is he allowed to repay himself for his self-sacrifice by any notoriety. He has to avoid advertisement as far as possible. Unlike the heroes of the stories of Mr Sheldon, the truly religious person is the last in the world to perform his good deeds with the idea that he has an admiring or critical or hostile crowd of onlookers. He does not seek to be marked off in any way from others, and leaves his example to take care of itself. "There is nothing outwardly," Coventry Patmore says, "to distinguish a 'saint' from 'com-

[1] *Cf.* end of chapter six.

mon persons.' I have known," he says, "two or three such persons, and I declare that but for the peculiar line of psychological research to which I am addicted, and hints from others in some degree akin to these men, I should never have guessed that they were any wiser or better than myself, or any other ordinary man of the world with a prudent regard for the common proprieties. I once asked a person more learned than I am in such matters to tell me what was the real difference. The reply was that the saint does everything that any other decent person does, only somewhat better and with a wholly different motive."[1] Hence it is not only extremely dangerous but also extremely difficult to discriminate between religious, and other, persons. And the cases where this discrimination has been attempted, combine the ludicrous and the tragic in about equal proportions. They have given a Tartuffe to comedy, and to the tragic muse all the melancholy volume of religious persecution.

But to return, it is impossible that the area of friendship should be co-extensive with that of the Christian society. "The man who has many friends," says Aristotle, "has no friends." If it were necessary, the right of the soul to exercise its preferences within the limits of the Christian society, might be shielded by the example of Jesus. The Christian profession involves neither the sacrifice of our own proper reserve, nor the duty of intruding upon the proper reserve of others.

[1] *Rod, Root and Flower*, 160.

If it may be claimed that the individual has come to his rights largely under the influence of the ideas which Jesus set in motion, it is not less true that the family life which is so congenial to the Teutonic races has been specially supported by the forms of Christianity. In fact it may even be maintained that the richness and depth of Teutonic emotion has been added to the sum of the Christian tradition. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that even Christianity created the family. It was already realised in a very noble type in pagan Rome; and perhaps the very appeal which the new faith made to the family instincts prepared the way for its reception in the Roman empire. "The early fathers recognised a spirit kindred with their own in the sanctities of the Roman family, and were met half-way by their antagonists of the better kind.[1] The patriotic Roman who dwelt fondly upon the religion of Numa, and sought to restore it, could not overlook the resemblance between his aspirations and the new rule of conduct. Once more, it might seem to him, the marriage tie was regarded as sacred; once more the minds of the young were shielded from pollution, and the passionate communion with the dead upon which the religion of primitive times was based, revived in the life of the catacombs, and the veneration of martyrs."[2] Hence it is somewhat difficult to dis-

[1] Augustine, *de civitate Dei*, v. 12.

[2] Author in *International Journal of Ethics*, 1897, p. 283.

tinguish between the Roman and the Christian in the beautiful passage in which St Augustine speaks of his dead parents. "Inspire, O my Lord and God, inspire Thy servants my brethren, Thy sons my masters, whom I serve with voice, heart, and pen, that as many as shall read these words, may remember at Thy altar Monica Thy servant, with Patricius, once her husband, through whom Thou didst wonderfully bring me into this life. May they, in this transitory light, remember my parents with kindly affection ; and my brothers under Thee their Father, in the Church their catholic mother ; and my fellow-citizens in the eternal Jerusalem for which the pilgrimage of Thy people longs from its setting out till its return ; that what she last requested of me, may, by the prayers of many, be more richly granted to her through my confessions than my prayers." [1]

In so far as religious feeling is a kind of purified summary of all human feeling, it will represent in its own way each of the deepest impulses of the heart, and where satisfaction is denied it will reach other compensations in other ways. There is a maternal element in the religious idea that has given rise to the worship of the Virgin-mother in whom the tenderness and sadness of the deepest feelings is personified. To one who studies religious dogma in relation to the facts of consciousness, it is clear that the worship of the Virgin was one of the forces that softened and

[1] *Conf.* ix. 13.

humanised the fierce spirits of the middle ages. And the reaction to which the excessive honour paid to the mother of Jesus led, left the sterner reformers with a God who was simply the harsh oriental deity as He is depicted in some of the *Psalms* and in the book of *Joshua*. Thus of the two contending parties each insisted on one aspect of the truth to the exclusion of the other. It is a striking fact that a new worship of the Divine Mother is springing up in such a way that her attributes are no longer centred upon Mary, but upon the Supreme. "If any feel their weakness as little children feel it, let them know that the Spirit of God broods over them as a mother over her babe."[1] And so the pictures of the Mother and the Child, on which the religious feeling of the mediæval world so largely spent itself, have a meaning that is never likely to be lost entirely.

Human love is the root from which all other love springs. And it is instructive to trace the behaviour of the different forms of the religious spirit to those human passions with which it is so mysteriously bound up. The fire of heavenly love passes back very easily into an earthly flame. There is scarcely anything more common than to find the natural impulse of ordinary affection tricking itself out in the garb of religion. And it is not easy to say how far the custom of celibacy may not have arisen among the clergy in order to avoid an almost inevitable confusion between two

[1] G. A. Smith, *Isaiah* i. 246.

overlapping groups of emotions. If this explanation is correct, we have, for all that, only determined the occasion, and not the cause of celibacy, which found its origin in a certain mystical exaltation of the unmarried state. Yet if celibacy seems an extreme measure, some eminently religious persons who have married have not been strikingly fortunate—as though the raptures of the heavenly state disqualified them for more commonplace circumstances. I will not speak at length of Sir Thomas More who married again within six weeks of the death of his first wife, nor of Hooker, who was advised so disastrously by his mother-in-law, but will come straight to John Bunyan, who speaks with the accents of the monk rather than the lover. "In this I admire the wisdom of God that he made me shy of women from my first conversion until now. Those know and can also bear me witness, with whom I have been most intimately concerned, that it is a rare thing to see me carry it pleasant towards a woman. The common salutation of Women I abhor, 'tis odious to me in whomsoever I see it. Their company alone I cannot away with. I seldom so much as touch a woman's hand, for I think these things are not so becoming me. When I have seen good men salute those Women that they have visited or that have visited them, I have at times made my objection against it; and when they have answered that it was but a piece of civility, I have told them it is not a comely sight. Some

indeed have urged the Holy Kiss; but them I have asked why they made baulks? Why did they salute the most handsome and let the ill-favoured go? Thus how laudable soever such things have been in the eyes of others, they have been unseemly in my sight."[1] How serious this temptation must have been to a susceptible person, may be gathered from a letter of Erasmus, who visited England just about a century before. "To mention but a single attraction, the English girls are divinely pretty; soft, pleasant, gentle and charming as the muses. They have one custom which cannot be too much admired. When you go anywhere on a visit the girls all kiss you. They kiss you when you arrive. They kiss you when you go away, and they kiss you again when you return. Go where you will it is all kisses; and my dear Faustus, if you had once tasted how soft and fragrant those lips are, you would wish to spend your life here."[2] There is a picture of the great humanist in the Louvre, in that fine square room where the masterpieces are brought together, in which Holbein portrays him, with an expression not unlike another humanist of our own day, who, though unmarried, was in later life susceptible to the charm of women's society. Bunyan's pilgrim would not even take his wife with him on the heavenly way. Erasmus and Jowett seem to move through life, if we may judge them by their letters, attended by the graces. In the

[1] *Grace Abounding*, 316. [2] Froude, *Erasmus*, 42.

pure air of the Christian society relationships are possible that would be scandalous among persons of less regular lives. For the most exquisite forms of the social life are sheltered under that delicacy of feeling which is the flower of religion. Hence it is unfair to attribute to the Christian spirit the uncouthness of Bunyan, or again of Whitefield. Whitefield, in his letter to Miss E., speaks with great contempt of the language of strong feeling. "The passionate expressions which carnal courtiers use, I think ought to be avoided by those who marry in the Lord."[1] Miss E., however, was insensible to the religious correctness of Whitefield's attitude, and left him to his fate. He married a widow. Whitefield's biographer, who, for unconscious humour, runs Whitefield hard, remarks very sagely upon this. "A young female of eminent piety and zeal might have fallen in with his habits and plans, and even found her chief happiness in sustaining his mighty and manifold undertakings, like Paul's Phœbe; but a widow, who had been 'a housekeeper'" (her own) "many years, and that in the retirement of Abergavenny, in Wales, could hardly be expected to unlearn the domestic system of the country nor to become a heroine for the world." Both Whitefield and some others forgot "the eternal womanly." Mrs Whitefield and her compeers were not entirely fortunate; they perhaps thought they were marrying men, and found themselves tied to theological systems.

[1] *Life*, by Phillips, 180.

It was a wise provision therefore that *The Song of Songs* was retained in the canon. Religion is "the poetry of the heart" after all. The commercial spirit that makes the love of the soul towards God an investment for eternity can scarcely be expected to treat the love of women in a less practical spirit. And yet Whitefield might have read in his Bible the following verses:

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave, the flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very flame of the Lord.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it: if a man should give all the substance of his house for love he would utterly be contemned.

There is, therefore, no intrinsic derogation to the love of the soul towards God when it is set alongside the love of women, and of friends. We have rather found that the disinterested self-sacrifice of unpretending human beings puts to shame the love of God which is professed by some; and after we have thus tried to imagine a purer love of the soul towards God, we have come back to the common relationships of life with a quickened insight.

I can imagine some to object that God can never be so realised by us as to be the object of love in the same way as human beings are. The reason is plain; such persons regard God as an intellectual ideal (under whatever name they may call Him) in such a way that they

never sink into the depths of that mystical fire, which certainly animates some souls in their thoughts of God. Jowett, indeed, considered it impossible, at this distance of time, to represent the person of Jesus to the mind as of one who still lived. But this thought is met by a canon laid down by Ritschl. "It is one of the conditions of religious faith that what it contains in thought should be represented as present." There is a classical passage in Newman's *Apologia*, in which he speaks of himself as resting "in the thought of two and only two absolutely and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator." In a like spirit St Teresa says we must in the beginning consider "that in the whole world there is only God and our soul."[1] Now in the case of these two, it may be said that they were influenced by tradition, and that we have not here the primitive attitude of the mind to the belief in God. Yet Prof. James traces out the lines along which the idea of God emerges as implicit in the moral judgment, and this as an *original* experience. "The emotion that beckons me on is undoubtedly the pursuit of an ideal social self (*i.e.* the individual in his relations to others), of a self that is at least worthy of approving recognition by the highest possible judging companion, if such companion there be. This self is the true, the intimate, the ultimate, the permanent *me* which I seek. This judge is God, the Absolute Mind, the 'Great Companion.'"[2]

[1] *Life*, xiii. 13. [2] *Textbook of Psychology*, p. 192.

In some mysterious way the apprehension of God, as it is thus described by James, seems not so much to lead to Him as already to be in itself a kind of participation in His nature, as though, to use a figure, He gave Himself to us in so far as we came to know Him. "God Himself," says Teresa, "is essential virtue from Whom all virtues proceed."[1] Or to put the same truth in the converse form, we come to know Him in so far as He gives Himself to us. Let us return, however, to the more cautious mode of statement with which we began. The oversoul is at once the mode in which the highest capacities of the soul are realised, and also the Being over against the soul on which the soul depends. This Being is hinted at in our deepest experiences, of which the poets are the exponents. Wordsworth formulates the idea of the "Great Companion" in a more restrained manner when he writes:

> "*I have felt*
> *A presence that disturbs me with the joy*
> *Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime*
> *Of something far more deeply interfused,*
> *Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,*
> *And the round ocean, and the living air,*
> *And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;*
> *A motion and a spirit, that impels*
> *All thinking things, all objects of all thought,*
> *And rolls through all things.*"

There can be no doubt first, of the intimacy of these experiences, second, of the love which is

[1] *Life*, xiv. 6.

directed to their object. When we go still further and "believe largely," we are led into a more definite sphere of utterance, and approach the dogmas of theology.

Augustine, in some striking sayings, reflects the intense manner in which he realised the divine companionship of which Prof. James speaks. "The abysses of the human conscience are naked in His eyes. The ear of God knows the utterances of his soul and the cry of his imagination." And from the idea that God is the allwise, there comes the idea that He is also the all-loving. "Thou didst know what I was suffering and no man knew. Thou findest pleasure in us and so regardest each of us as though Thou hadst him alone to care for." And then answering the doubt which inevitably arises, "I loved Thee and not a phantasm in Thy place."[1]

In the language of St Teresa, the attitude of the soul towards God (which is just coming to self-consciousness in Wordsworth, and in St Augustine has spread from the perception to the heart), reaches a more intimate form still. "God, in His great mercy, will have the soul comprehend that His Majesty is so near to it that it need not send messengers to Him, but may speak to Him itself and not with a loud crying, because so near is He already that He understands even the movements of its lips."[2] Of

[1] *Conf.* x. 2; xii. 7; iii. 11; viii. 3. [2] *Life*, xiv. 7.

course it is open to anyone to say that in these last utterances we are already passed from reality to fancy, and to take up the objection already present to the mind of the African saint, that these emotions are directed upon a phantasm. Such an one, however, is bound also to put on one side the affirmations of Wordsworth. What religion does for thought is analogous to what it does for the feelings. Just as religion organises the feelings not so much by creating new ones as by setting them in their proper amount and relation, so theology does not impose upon the soul anything really alien to its nature, but, under the influence of religious passion, fuses into one clear ray the broken colours which are transmitted to the soul through the differing mediums by which it is surrounded. At least this is the mark of a genuine theology as distinguished from mere wordspinning. Hence in Ritschl's phrase, "the wisdom of the schools must be brought to the test of actual comparison with the phenomenon of consciousness which has to be explained."[1]

Now it is a strange thing that the school of Ritschl, at the same time that it lays such great stress on the voice of consciousness, expressly discard from the inner life all those phenomena in which, perhaps, the soul is most vividly conscious both of itself and of God. If the lines of the poet mean anything, they point to a contact of the soul with God, of which the possibility is expressly

[1] *History of Doctrines of Justification and Reconciliation*, 256.

denied by Ritschl outside the historical fact of the life and death of Jesus.

Herrmann, indeed, translates the thought of Wordsworth into a more formal expression when he says : " Every man to whom religion is something more than a store of knowledge, or burden of commandments, experiences at times a certain stirring of feeling within him, amid which alone he is able to gain due profit from all that is of religious significance. At such a time God makes Himself felt and sets the man in that inward condition which is blessedness. Without this experience of God all the rest is so empty and vain that it does not deserve the name of religion. It is in such experience that we find the very essence of religion, that sweet inalienable possession of the soul." (But) " we have not yet described what is peculiarly characteristic of Christian piety." [1] Now it is quite true that religious feeling cannot be content to remain at the stage described by Wordsworth. But that is no reason for the attempt to discredit this stage of experience. And in particular, when Herrmann asserts that, according to mysticism, Christ leads the man who has become His disciple up to the threshold of blessedness, but then the mystic steps *alone* across that threshold, I set against this the saying of St Teresa, to which reference has already been made : " What I would say is, that the most Sacred Humanity of Christ is not to be counted among

[1] *Communion with God*, 17.

the objects from which we have to withdraw."[1] So again St John of the Cross declares that in the withdrawal of the soul into itself, Christ and His most Sacred Humanity are not to be forgotten.[2] At the same time, the mystical writers would have saved Herrmann from the exaggeration with which he says: "We do not merely come through Christ to God, it is truer to say that we find nothing in God but Christ." Religious enthusiasm is no excuse for exaggeration of the truth. Wordsworth, for example, is raised by his love of nature and of humanity to an intuition of the divine, and it is simply impossible to wrest his experience in the way described by Herrmann. The doctrine of the Trinity not only guarantees the traditional estimate of the person of Jesus, it also does much more; it makes it possible to include in the Christian idea of God all those thoughts which are, so to speak, the vestibule to the apprehension of Christ. Hence we can treat the poetic apprehension of nature and of history as integral parts in the Christian revelation. We have already seen that there was a poetic aspect of the career of the Saviour, in which the loftiest form of poetry, the tragic drama, was realised by Him, not only as the sublime protagonist, but as moved by the catholic sympathies of the tragic poet. In this sense it may at once be affirmed that the attitude of Wordsworth is implicitly included in the vision of Jesus. But that is not what the Ritschlean means.

[1] *Life*, xxii. 11. [2] *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, III. c. i.

He tries to simplify the Christian Religion by stripping from it everything which is not explicitly formulated in the account which the *New Testament* gives of Jesus as a historical personage. But we have seen that the intimacy of the soul with God is to be understood in a wider sense.[1]

At the same time, Jesus completes the views of the world which are held by the poet and the scientific man. The poet introduces into life certain preferences, and singles out what is of more value than the rest; the scientific man determines what is real and what is not. Jesus unites the work of the poet, and of the scientific man; He "gives us a vision of the power of the Good over the Real."[2] "We arrive at the thought of omnipotence because we are obliged to pay to Jesus the homage of believing that He must succeed, even if all the world beside be against Him." And "God makes Himself known as the power that is with Jesus." In this way the communion of the soul with God is completed. Through the life of Jesus the Divine nature is disclosed to us in a more intimate way than is possible to one who remains merely at the standpoint of the poet or of the scientific man. The idea of a divine companion thus gradually receives shape until it is fused in one harmonious whole, the idea of God as that idea is transformed for us when we realise the life of Jesus.

The aspiration of the soul towards its invisible, or if you like ideal, companion is a prayer, which, as

[1] P. 167. [2] Herrmann, *op. cit.*, 96.

St Teresa says, may be "not with noise of words, but with a heartfelt desire to be heard." This aspiration is not in itself necessarily pleasant at first. In fact it would seem somewhat exceptional for the first efforts at this devotion to be accompanied with a sensible sweetness. Hence, "the soul which begins to walk in the way of mental prayer with resolution, and is determined not to care much, neither to rejoice nor to be greatly afflicted, whether sweetness and tenderness fail it, or our Lord grants them, has already travelled a great part of the road." [1] Prayer is the expression of the love of the soul towards its invisible companion—a love which "does not consist in tears, nor in this sweetness and tenderness which we for the most part desire, and with which we console ourselves, but rather in serving Him in justice, fortitude, and humility." [2] It follows that every aspiration towards these ends is of the nature of prayer, and that every man at some time or other engages in this implicit prayer. "Most men, either continually or occasionally, carry a reference to the ideal judge in their breast. . . . It is a much more essential part of the consciousness of some men than of others. Those who have the most of it are probably the most *religious*. But I am sure that even those who say they are altogether without it deceive themselves and really have it in some degree." [3]

[1] St Teresa, *Life*, xi. 21. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] James, *Textbook of Psychology*, 193.

To the aspiration of the soul towards God there seems to answer a condescension of God towards the soul. "Thou takest delight in us," says St Augustine. Those who are the subjects of the deepest insight and passion speak of themselves as though they were taken possession of by another. Now we must guard against misunderstanding here. The way in which spiritualistic "mediums" are thought to be governed by their "controls" is a caricature of any theory which sets out to give a consistent explanation of the facts of inspiration. The soul does not stand over against "the fountain light" of all its day in an independent isolation, like the medium whose own personality seems to be expelled for a time by that of another.[1] On the contrary, the relation between the soul and "the master light of all our seeing" is such that the soul comes most to itself when it is thus invaded by what at first sight seem external influences. There is an order in the way in which such influences disclose themselves to the soul, although it is not the same perhaps in any two cases. And the descriptions which the mystics give are to be taken as in the main autobiographical rather than valid also for others. Still we will hear St Teresa as she describes the stages of prayer. After the first laborious aspirations, the soul in the second stage begins to be recollected, that is, to attain a certain equilibrium of impulse and thought. "This is a

[1] James, *Textbook of Psychology*, 213.

gathering together of the faculties of the soul within itself, in order that it may have the fruition of that contentment in greater sweetness ; but the faculties are not lost, neither are they asleep ; the will alone is occupied in such a way that without knowing how it has become a captive, it gives a simple consent to become the prisoner of God, for it knows well what it is to be the captive of Him it loves." [1] The reader would find it instructive to apply this description to the way in which the soul is drawn towards any other ideal, say, as it slowly becomes conscious of its vocation. In the third degree of prayer, the soul passes into an ecstatic state which is compared by many mystical writers to intoxication. This may be distinguished from the nervous disorders described in chapter v., by considering the mode in which the soul expresses itself at such times. In his moments of loftiest inspiration the soul of the artist rushes upon its object with a kind of frenzy, that has in it something akin to intoxication, and yet for all that, the works executed at such times are often masterpieces. I am thinking especially of the fury with which Michelangelo would throw himself upon rough blocks of marble in order to disengage thence his buried ideas. A French scholar of the sixteenth century saw him in one of these moments of inebriation. "I am able to affirm that I have seen Michelangelo, at the age of more than sixty years, and not the

[1] *Lije*, xiv. 3.

strongest for his time of life, knock off more chips from an extremely hard marble in one quarter of an hour than three young stonecutters could have done in three or four—a thing quite incredible to one who has not seen it. He put such impetuosity and fury into his work, that I thought that the whole must fly to pieces; hurling to the ground at one blow great fragments three or four inches thick."[1] Now stories like these make it easier to believe St Teresa when she describes the fervours into which she fell; and this the more because her writings exhibit a clearness and precision of thought and phrase that are as far as possible removed from the inarticulate ravings or drivel which is one of the symptoms of the lower kind of ecstasy. In the last place the soul seems to attain a substantial union with God. The first impulse of the great mystical writers seems to be to shrink from describing the crowning stage of the aspirations of the soul, inasmuch as it rather seems to come from beyond the being of the soul. In this respect such writers follow the precedent set for them in another quarter. The operations of genius directed to artistic creation, or to discovery, or to mechanical invention, seem to elude reduction to the common terms of daily life. We need not, therefore, be surprised if the highest endeavours of the soul towards the spiritual ideal refuse in like manner to conform to what is

[1] Symonds, *Michelangelo*, i. 101.

commonplace. Hence we must not concede, without further consideration, that the obscurity of this part of psychology arises from the fact that its subject matter is shifting and unreal.

The aspirations of the soul towards the ideal have been translated by the great theologians into statements about the divine nature. Augustine, in the *Confessions*, especially does this. And these aspirations furnish us indeed with more than partial clues to that nature. For the virtues do not attach to God simply as attributes which inhere, but they find their substantial existence in Him. He is not simply good, wise, beautiful, but is actually goodness, wisdom, beauty. It is not difficult to read in this traditional form of statement that God is regarded as an Ideal. So long, however, as we treat the different parts of the Ideal in their separation, we fail really to understand them, or their relation to worship. But when we think of goodness, wisdom, beauty, power as brought together into a system, and traced, however dimly, in the actual course of experience as by Wordsworth, we are on the way to an apprehension of the divine nature, which is not far from the orthodox one. And so the relation of the soul to its ideal is correctly brought out in a saying attributed to St Gregory, that "when a soul truly desires God, it already possesses Him."

Thus the divine ideal appears as a psychical universe,[1] and such a universe so far as it enters

[1] A universe in psychology denotes a system of ideas united together by their reference to an object.

the individual experience, as it were absorbs that experience into itself, while at the same time the soul seems to be active in the process. In the same sense St John of the Cross speaks of God as the centre of the soul, or again of wisdom as absorbing the soul into itself.[1] What has been described as the Night of the Soul is the negative aspect of this process, in which the soul is stripped of that which conflicts with the new universe of thought and feeling.

Again, we must not suppose that this account of the presence of God in the soul is meant to exhaust the divine nature—an impossible thought. At the same time, those who admit the existence of those ideals which are included under the divine name, can at least go thus far with us. No one can deny that the presence of this divine ideal has been historically operative in human souls, whatever further objective references be granted, or denied.

We are now able to deal with a statement of Mr Bradley's to which reference has already been made.[2] If the divine nature consists, in part, in a systematic ideal of which goodness, wisdom, beauty, power, are constituents, we can imagine without self-contradiction, that it is actually present in the soul in such a way that there is an inward communion of the soul with God, and not merely a communion mediated by external occurrences. At the same time this assertion must be limited by

[1] *Living Flame of Love*, verse 1, line 3. [2] C. iii., end.

the converse assertion ; that in this communion of the soul with its ideal, it finds itself by going beyond its first experience. We have thus returned to the standpoint of an earlier chapter, and find the oversoul not only pointed at in certain circumstances of the social experience, but as realised in the aspirations of the individual.

It is convenient to retain this term oversoul, for it will remind us (*a*) that the revelation of God to the soul is conditioned by its capacities, and is not a full revelation of Him ; (*b*) that it is made to the soul in common with other souls—for God is no private possession ; (*c*) that He is revealed not only in the commonplace events of life, but still more in the heroic sphere, which not so much lies over as penetrates the other, as " the tragedy of the commonplace," to use Maeterlinck's phrase.

Lastly, since, as we have seen repeatedly, a thought that is to live must burn, we can view the passionate realisation of the Ideal as *a living flame of love* in which the soul's aspirations are fused into one. Since, at the same time, the life of the soul is at these levels both its own and also not its own, we may speak of this living flame of love as infused from without. The reader who finds in this last statement a certain exaggeration, is requested to consider what was said about psychological optimism ;[1] namely, that the unassisted soul has no necessary tendency towards the good, and to remember that the soul does not develop solely

[1] P. 170.

from within, and that as between the soul and God everything that comes to the soul is to be referred, in a sense, to Him.

The third aspiration in *The Lord's Prayer*, therefore, when it is realised, constitutes actually the union of the soul with God, a union which takes place in the will and, therefore, at the same time, in the depths of the soul. It is a question, therefore, whether there was not a certain justification for the action of the primitive church which held that only those who were truly entering upon the religious life could use this prayer. For in it the soul begins by claiming consciousness of its own relationship to God, and goes on to assert the union of its own will with the divine will. If prayer was not degraded so often from the level of aspiration to that of mere request, the true meaning of prayer could not be thus overlooked.

CHAPTER IX

SYMBOL AND RITUAL

The beauty of God—Dignity of handicrafts—Use of symbols—In expressing truth—In affecting the mind—Symbolism of the word and the act—The visionary as the creator of symbols—Blake at Felpham—His symbolic system—Symbol as causing visionary experiences—Validity of symbolic method.

IT is very seldom that God is spoken of as beautiful. That this should be so, marks two facts: first, that the true dignity of the beautiful is not understood; second, that the divine ideal is imperfectly grasped. God seems to have revealed Himself to the ancient world largely through the sense of beauty. Cicero remarks "that the beauty of the universe and the order of the heavenly motions compel man to confess there is an excellent and eternal Nature, and that It is worthy of the veneration and wonder of the human race."[1] Dr Arnold, in commenting upon this passage, called the attention of his pupils "to the contrast between Christian faith and love, and that creed of later paganism which made 'the feelings of man towards the Deity to be exactly those with which we gaze at a beautiful sunset.'"[2] Yet this view of the divine

[1] *De divinatione*, ii. 148. [2] *Life*, by Stanley, after letter 307.

nature is unexceptionable as far as it goes, and is only to be condemned for its deficiencies, not for its positive character. Moreover, it emphasises just that view of God which is absent from the thoughts of most Englishmen. For it is possible to blaspheme God under His attribute of beauty as well as under that of truth or of holiness. And, on the other hand, we may worship Him under this attribute no less than under His other attributes. Wordsworth felt the deficiency of the religious temper of his times in this particular, and is half conscious of the source from which he drew his inspiration. "*Little we see in Nature which is ours*," he cries. "*Great God! I'd rather be a Pagan suckled in a creed outworn.*" If the self-possessed poet could be moved to such an outburst by the England of the early years of this century, his language could hardly be less violent if he saw the unlovely guise in which quiet country towns and villages have grown into mean and squalid centres of industry. This disfigurement of the earth is plainly in contravention of the Divine Will. For the beauty of Nature through which God reveals Himself has its fellow in the beauty of human handiwork, a beauty which has only been lacking to any serious extent since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Augustine could say of the craftsmen of his time, "The beauties which pass through the souls of artists to their fingers come from that Beauty which is over their souls, and for which my soul sighs by

day and night."[1] And those who have filled their eyes with the grace of cities like Oxford and Bruges and Florence, where the mediæval spirit still colours material things with a visionary beauty, will not hesitate to extend the utterance of St Augustine to the more humble work of the carpenter and stonemason. "*Raise the stone and there thou shalt find Me, cleave the wood and there am I.*"[2] The Preacher had spoken of the dangers and hardship which attach to the life of the artisan.[3] Jesus, on the other hand, promises to be present with His fellow-craftsmen in their labour, and fulfilled His promise in the art which could raise the wooden fléche of Amiens, and choose and set the stones of Netley. It is a religious work, therefore, to educate human beings in the appreciation of beautiful objects in order that they may recognise the beauty of the King, that beauty for which Augustine sighed day and night, and which he now enjoys.

Again the dignity of human labour loses one of its main safeguards when the products of that labour are expelled from the house of God, and are replaced by mechanical productions. The sympathetic analysis of Gothic architecture in which Mr Ruskin has led the way, shows beyond all gainsaying, how, on the one hand, the beauty of mediæval work turns upon the personal expression which can be traced even in the most clumsy productions, and, on the other hand, how

[1] *Conf.* x. 34. [2] *Logia Jesu*, 5. [3] Ecclesiastes x. 9.

the independence with which each man worked reacted upon his powers of imagination. The Oxford Movement has derived part of its vigour from the appeal which it makes to the sense of the sublime and the beautiful, and in particular has furnished, in the building of new churches, a field in which the principles laid down by Mr Ruskin have been brought to a successful test. The mediæval arts of painted glass, mosaic, woodcarving, illumination, embroidery, have been recalled to life, and have saved some men with powers of design and execution from missing their calling in less congenial work. At the same time the labour market has been, to that extent, relieved of competing hands. It is a cause of deep regret that in England so few religious bodies have realised their responsibilities in the erection of places of worship, and that, outside the influence of the Oxford Movement, there is not one religious building in ten which is other than a most lamentable exhibition of ignorance and bad taste. Now, since as we have seen there is a very close connection between the dignity and the happiness of labour on the one side, and its proper employment on the other (p. 174), no one can say that the circumstance before us is an unimportant one even from the standpoint of spiritual religion. Spiritual religion, as we cannot too often remind ourselves, does not in the Christian view consist in a withdrawal from the visible into the invisible, nor in a postponement

of all interests to a future life; it is rather the interpenetration of common things by a sense of the mystery which underlies them, and of the purposes to which they should tend. And so the mode in which material things are taken up into the service of man, and especially into his service when he is worshipping God, has a strange correspondence with the assumption of the human into the divine in the life of Jesus. Thus stone and wood and metal are, as it were, lost to themselves, and transmuted by a kind of alchemy into something higher by the touch of the creative artist, and this transmutation constitutes their symbolism which I shall now attempt to describe.

But, we must note, there is another kind of symbolism than that of material things. Not only are the visible surroundings of human life transformed by their reference to their true end, but the sayings, actions, and events of life are capable of a like transformation. There are thus two distinct fields in which symbolism can be employed. There is the symbolism of visible things in the work of the painter, sculptor, builder, and other craftsmen; and the symbolism of ideas and actions as used by the poet, the teacher, the seer, and the minister of religion.

But it may be asked, why should symbols be used at all? Why should not facts be stated with the utmost clearness, and then left to themselves?

In the first place, there are many truths which are properly expressed through visible forms, and

can hardly be expressed in any other way. For example, historical facts cannot be properly understood without the aid of maps, of pictures, and of portraits, either literal or representative. The life of Jesus cannot be realised definitely merely through the verbal descriptions contained in the gospels. These must be supplemented by the pictorial Geography of Palestine, and by representations of oriental manners. When Carlyle was writing his *History of Frederick the Great*, he surrounded himself with pictures of the places and the persons he was describing, in order that through their means he might form the most vivid idea possible. And so the personification of the virtues in their beauty, or the vices in their deformity, gives a support to those who find it hard to present to themselves virtue and vice in the abstract.

This illustration brings us to the second use of symbols. Although they are necessarily partial presentations of the truth, they affect the mind more strongly than the bare abstract truth itself. A rough picture is often better than none, and the parable is better than the ethical definition. Round the symbol with its appeal to the sense there radiates a glow upon the associated ideas. The memories of foreign travel come to life again as we look upon and handle the photograph, or the weapon, or the coin that we have brought back with us. Those books which have been used in the intimacy of the soul with itself, whether the

book of devotional exercises in religion, or, in poetry, the favourite garden of verses, are like springs from which the familiar feeling flows.

From this effectiveness of the symbol there springs a kind of hypnotising power which leads both to use and abuse. On the one hand, it turns familiar objects into fetishes, and so far as the initiative of the conscience is destroyed, this use of symbols passes into idolatry. But the initiative of the conscience is not capable of being thus weakened unless the character is affected in other ways as well. And as we have seen, under the head of ecstasy, the leaders of revivals often appeal to this very same susceptibility and lay hold upon the soul through a kind of hypnotism.[1] In each case there is a falling back from the method of Jesus to that of the nature religions. And yet taken in itself the use of symbols is unable to degrade the spiritual life in this way. There are limits within which the physical excitement of the religious meeting and the physical effect of the material symbol can be made to subserve spiritual ends, and just as certain forms of religious mania which occur almost exclusively among persons who are subject to Calvinist influences,[2] must not lead us to regard the moderate use of religious excitement as worthy of condemnation, so, on the other hand, the use of religious symbols as a means of exciting emotion need not be surrendered because some people

[1] P. 118. [2] Ribot, *Psychology of the Emotions*, 324.

make fetishes of them. For me a spreading landscape or a richly-coloured sunset excite emotions not unlike those which I experience at the theatre when the poet lights up the abysses of the soul; or—I speak simply of externals—when the gorgeous ceremony of a festival of the Church presents in like manner to the outward sense the mode in which life can be raised from its daily level to heights which in the daily life we are for ever being made to forget. These things are not the one thing necessary in religion. But there are degrees and they have their place.

Not only therefore are symbols a permissible mode of conveying the truth; the symbolic manner sometimes rises to the limits of the sublime. There is only one thing more sublime, and that is the full possession of the truth itself. "Jesus," says Eusebius, "was adorned by the Father, not with symbols, but with the truth itself, and He gave to His followers no longer types or images, but the virtues themselves unadorned, and a heavenly life."[1] But Jesus, in conveying these divine truths, made use of parables and comparisons in such a way, that those to whom He spoke were not infrequently at a loss for His meaning.[2] And yet He never dispensed with parables—a method which conveys a truth of a higher degree through a lower truth or a simpler one. In fact, it may be said that no teacher has ever been more sceptical

[1] *Hist. Eccl.* i. 3. [2] Luke viii. 10.

about the power of his hearers to enter at once into the full possession of the truth than Jesus. He employed the symbolic method, therefore, and so He disciplined the soul by forcing it to realise —not only the truth—but also the act of mind by which the truth is apprehended, and without which truth is only known from the outside as something given, and not as something which we can gain for ourselves. "God," says Tertullian, in a phrase which calls to mind the figure of the Father in the ceiling of the Sistine chapel, "God stretches a hand to Faith, which can be more easily helped by images and parables, both of words and things."[1] There cannot be anything, therefore, more harmonious with the temper of Jesus than the symbolism which, as though the parables had been crystallised, turned the great cathedrals into sacred books.

Again there is not only a symbolism of the word in which Jesus characteristically expressed Himself: He used also a symbolism of action. He taught humility by the washing of the feet of the twelve. He broke bread in a characteristic manner to which He gave, and the Church following Him has ever given, the most sublime interpretations; as though the isolated act had in itself something of the power to compel eternity, and as though the repetition of that act "represents a real transfer of power."[2] It would be possible in this way to consider the reference of His conduct

[1] *De anima*, 43. [2] *Life of R. W. Dale*, 360.

at the different crises of His life, so far as it has been recorded, and to mark off the way in which each act, as it were, reached beyond itself towards some deeper meaning. And so the mere imitation of the external circumstances of the life of Jesus has ever been held to possess a certain spiritual efficacy, as though His poverty and sufferings had, in themselves, a certain meaning which extended beyond Himself.

He has not left us therefore merely with thought separated from its visible and tangible embodiment, nor with ethical precepts cut off from the personality in which alone they gain meaning. (An ethical precept without an example is like a photograph of nobody in particular.) But the thought and the precept are at once expressed and realised. And so symbol consists in the successive degrees in which thought and reality come to coincide, till it ceases at the point of their complete identification in Him. Abstract thought lies on the under side of symbol.

Now the visionary for whom thought is rising from the abstract into the world of figurate expression, is the creator of symbols. In order that we may be enabled to understand the mode in which the visionary experience leads to the use of symbols, we will listen to Blake's own account of the way in which he was inspired to write his symbolic poems *Jerusalem* and *Milton*.

Blake was taken down from London into the country to Felpham by a patron, Hayley, the

friend of Cowper. There he lived for three years by the seashore, and "enjoyed for a time a new and ampler illumination."

"Felpham," he says, "is more spiritual. Heaven opens here on all sides her golden gates, her windows are not obstructed by vapours; voices of celestial inhabitants are more distinctly heard, and their forms more distinctly seen, and my cottage is also a shadow of their houses." As he walked along the seashore he was haunted by the forms of Moses and the prophets, of Homer and Milton. They seemed to him to be "majestic shadows, grey but luminous, and superior to the common height of men."[1] These and other vague personages seemed to communicate to him the matter of his great poem. "I may praise it," he says, "since I dare not pretend to be any other than the secretary; the authors are in Eternity. This poem shall by Divine assistance be progressively printed and ornamented with prints and given to the public. But of this work I care to say little to Mr H., since he is as much averse to my poetry as he is to a chapter in the Bible." But the opposition of Hayley to the visionary life was echoed in certain moods of Blake's own. And he seemed to himself to be tempted at times to turn his back on prophecy and to take advantage of the openings which Hayley, with the best intentions, kept offering to him. Blake might have become a fashionable painter of miniatures, and in

[1] *Cf.* Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, 35, 71.

this way have attained a competency. He preferred to break with the world and with Hayley. To this decision we owe the splendid designs which are found scattered through the *Milton* and the *Jerusalem*. And it would be hazardous to affirm that Blake's genius would have shone forth so characteristically in the illustrations to Blair's *Grave* and the book of *Job*, had he come to any other decision. But it was not arrived at without a struggle. "If we fear," says Blake, "to do the dictates of our angels, and tremble at the task set before us, if we refuse to do spiritual acts because of natural fears or natural desires, who can describe the torments of such a state?" In this time of doubt the spirits no longer conversed with him. "They were angry at Felpham," he used to say. But the state of torment came to an end. "Though I have been very unhappy I am so no longer. I have travelled through perils and darkness not unlike a champion. I have conquered and shall go on conquering. Nothing can withstand the fury of my course among the stars of God and in the abysses of the accuser. None can know the spiritual acts of my three years' slumber on the banks of the ocean, unless he has seen them in the spirit, or unless he has read my long poem descriptive of these acts; for I have in these years composed an immense number of verses on one grand theme similar to Homer's *Iliad* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*; the persons and machinery entirely new to inhabitants of earth, some of the persons

excepted. I have written this poem from immediate dictation, twelve, or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time without premeditation, and even against my will. I mention this to show you what I consider the grand reason of my being brought down here. I consider it as the grandest poem that the world contains. Allegory addressed to the intellectual powers, while it is altogether hidden from the corporeal understanding, is my definition of the most sublime poetry." And the allegory of this poem turns, we are told, in another place upon "the three years' trouble" at Felpham.

The elaborate myths, figures, terminologies, which are employed by Blake in these poems are not to be regarded as his whole meaning. They are the vehicle of his experiences, rather than the experiences themselves. Hence there still remains a task after the covering of symbolism is removed from his thoughts. The thoughts themselves must be placed in some sort of relation one to another.

For Blake, as for so many other mystics, the human form is the leading symbol. On the one hand, it represents the universe; sun, moon, stars and earth. There is a fine design at the end of the first book of *Jerusalem*, in which the heavenly bodies are represented upon the body of Albion—a thought which is worked out in the *Purple Island* of Phineas Fletcher. Hence we can understand such verses as these:

The Blue
Of our immortal Veins and all their Hosts fled from our limbs
And wandered distant in a dismal night clouded and dark.

"Man," says Swedenborg, "is a microcosm or little universe, because the created universe is man in an image." The head of man, according to Blake, is the south, his feet the north, his heart is the east, and his loins the west. Or again, his head is the sun, his heart the moon, his feet the earth, and his loins the stars. Such comparisons are frequent throughout the mystic writings of all ages.

But this outward universe is a delusion. Blake is persuaded that "distance is but a phantasy." Our life in the external world is but a sleep in Ulro. Hence the appearances of the things in the world are unmeaning apart from their symbolic interpretations. It is Blake's task, therefore, *to open the immortal Eyes of Man inwards into the Worlds of thought.* We have seen how the human form corresponds to the world without; let us now trace its correspondence with the world within. Plato had placed the reason in the head, the courageous temper in the heart, desire below the heart. In a somewhat similar fashion Blake denotes the imagination by the head, the emotions by the heart, desire by the loins, and the life of sense perception by the feet. Here we have the four Eternal senses, or Zoas, to use Blake's term. Single vision is the Zoa, Urthona, who is in the north, that is, in the feet. Tharmas represents the twofold vision. The threefold vision, who, as one of the Zoas, is called Luvah, answers to the heart. The fourfold vision, who, as one of

the Zoas, is called Urizen, answers to the head. Again the Zoas correspond with the sense organs; Urizen with the eyes, Luvah with the nostrils, Tharmas with the tongue, Urthona with the ear.

Answering to the four Zoas—the four eternal senses—are the four spaces. Urizen should be in Eden, *the Portals of the brain where The Eternal Great Humanity Divine planted his Paradise*; Luvah is *threefold in soft Beulah's night*; Tharmas is *the Parent power darkening in the west*; Urthona is in *the sleep of Ulro*. All these complicated statements with which, I fear, the reader is becoming confused, may be expressed in a table very simply:—

	Universe.	Man.	Mind.		
S	Sun	Head	Imagination	Urizen	Eden
E	Moon	Heart	Emotion	Luvah	Beulah
W	Stars—sea	Loins	Desire	Tharmas	Generation
N	Earth	Feet	Sense-perception	Urthona	Ulro

The reader who bears this table in mind will find that he has a sufficient key to Blake's meaning to enable him to enter upon the study of the prophetic books. Those who compare this table with the tables given by the editors of Blake, will observe that it differs somewhat from their interpretation. The four Zoas are not placed on the same level as by them, but are arranged in an hierarchy according to the four eternal senses which they represent. In the next place, it makes for clearness if we remember that in *Jerusalem* the main interest is within the mind,

and that the human form and the outward universe are always spoken of as symbols.

I have dwelt upon the symbolism of Blake at what some readers may think a disproportionate length, because he exhibits in an exaggerated, and perhaps morbid manner, those workings of the imagination which, in the case of others, have furnished the visions of Ezekiel; of the seer of Patmos; of Dante, in whom also as in Blake, vision was allied in the closest manner with symbol. It is to be noted that the example of Blake suggests an explanation of what in the *Apocalypse*, for instance, seems irrelevant. Blake, regarding himself as the secretary of authors who were in heaven, would not presume to alter what he heard. So, too, we may suppose that the author of the *Apocalypse* would be carried by his vision into detail which was not entirely determined by his leading thoughts. Hence, too, in Dante the poetry of *The Divine Comedy* overflows the limits set to it by the symbolic intention of the poem. Unfortunately Blake thought himself lifted beyond criticism even by himself, and is a standing disproof of Mr Ruskin's saying that the imagination is infallible. In him prophetic utterance is far more artless than in the case of the least disciplined of the prophets of the *Old Testament*.

Symbolism furnishes the materials upon which the visionary power may work. Blake, as it were, converses with himself in a language which he has partly received from tradition, partly con-

structed for himself. The system of Swedenborg, which Blake modifies and extends in so remarkable a manner, is itself based upon a certain heritage of comparisons and analogies, which, although they are arbitrary and misleading when we regard them as statements of fact, yet for all that turn upon and express analogies of feeling. In order that we may follow out this method far enough to gain an idea of its use, we will take the familiar analogy between the garden of Eden and the human soul as yet innocent. Whatever may be said about the one, may in a corresponding sense be said about the other. The trees of the garden are like the affections of man running up into perceptions ; the beasts of the garden are like the affections of man running up into impulses and desires.[1] The four methods of prayer which occupied us at the end of the last chapter are illustrated by St Teresa through comparison with the watering of a garden, and when it is remembered that water in the mystical writers universally signifies truths, the saint's comparison becomes more explicit still. So for Savonarola the grasses and plants denote the intellect craving for knowledge, and beasts denote fierce appetites.[2] We must distinguish carefully between this mode of interpretation, the strictly symbolic one, in which everything is referred to the life of the soul, and those other interpretations by which there is reference to the course of events, whether

[1] Swedenborg, *Apocalypse Revealed*, 400, 567.

[2] *Life*, by Villari, 1896 ed., *n.* to chapter vii.

in the Jewish nation, or the Christian Church militant and again triumphant.[1] From these latter standpoints symbolism passes into prediction.

In spite of the reaction against the extent to which the use of symbolism has been carried by mediæval and mystical writers,[2] there can be no doubt of its validity within certain limits. The meaning of an occurrence is not exhausted when its physical relations have been enumerated. It has still to be related to the characters of the soul and again to the whole course of human history. And the symbolic method is in this respect like tragedy, which presents things in a more universal and philosophical manner than the annalist. Unless, therefore, poetry and religion are to vanish from life, man will continue to penetrate below the surface of events to wrest their secret bearing upon his soul; and we must therefore agree with Newman when he says that "it may almost be laid down as an historical fact that the mystical interpretation and orthodoxy will stand or fall together."[3]

Hence, too, the use of symbolism as a means by which the poetic temper is communicated even to those in whom there is the least of the poetic spirit. And so we can almost agree with Blake's definition of the most sublime poetry as "allegory addressed to the intellectual powers while it is altogether hidden from the corporeal

[1] *Life*, by Villari, 1896 ed., p. 118.
[2] Hatch, *Hibbert Lectures*, c. iii. *passim*.
[3] *Essay on Development*, 324.

understanding." There is no doubt whatever that to the average man of the day, whose reading is confined to the newspaper and the finely-chopped and hashed-up contents of the popular magazine, all great poetry, music, fine art, and religion, is as a sealed book. The proof of this is that anything above mediocrity is scarcely ever presented to him. For him the book of life remains closed. In his firmament there are no stars; only the lamps in the streets and the footlights of the music hall. And even these lose their poetry (so cleverly revealed by the muse of Arthur Symons) when he looks upon them. The great majority of men move from the enchanted garden of passion into the toilsome pilgrimage of after-life, and find too late that they have forgotten to bring with them the talisman of romance, the talisman which in its myriad forms is the safeguard against ennui and dryness of spirit. To those who have not yet lost all sensitiveness of temper, in whom feeling is not yet petrified, the seer, the artist, and the poet come, and from their own abundant stores of invention, make up what is lacking in others. But there is a time beyond which such repentance is impossible. Prof. James says that the ideas which a man gets before he is twenty-five have to serve him throughout life. To those for whom the fatal hour has tolled and tolled too soon, nothing remains but to tread the earth for the rest of their tale of years, phantoms in the guise of men.

CHAPTER X

PROPHECY AND INSPIRATION

Inspiration higher than symbolism—Ecstasy and prophecy—The spiritualistic trance—Obsession by ideas—"Speaking with tongues"—Vision and prophecy—Parable and thought—Feeling and insight—Prophecy and prediction—Savonarola—His visions and trances—Exegesis—Prophecies—As statesman—Cromwell as prophet—Religious enthusiasm as opposed to liberty and freethinking.

WE have vindicated the normal character of certain kinds of vision, and also the validity of the symbolic method. Some of those who have come thus far, may have done so with a certain repugnance, as though it was dangerous —and indeed it is—to leave even for a short time the solid ground of common experience. In fact this temporary journey into the mysterious only becomes permissible when the soul is dominated by ideas which flow from the central body of truth, or in other words, which contribute to express that ideal which is drawing the world to itself. For it is to be remembered that the intellectual ideal is not yet fully expressed, any more than the moral ideal is yet fully realised. The proportions of the different parts of the whole system of truth do not reveal themselves

to the analytical method. And, therefore, just as the preferences of certain minds lay down canons of moral judgment to which the rest of mankind feel more or less bound to conform, so in the intellectual world certain souls reach heights of insight from which everything is seen, not under the more or less accidental and transitory aspects of the actual, but, in Spinoza's phrase, under the form of eternity. It is not essential that these men should express themselves under the forms of vision or of symbol, though there is a certain propriety sometimes in the use of these means. But such inspiration reaches its highest forms in those who have risen above symbol and parable to the direct communication of the truth. Jesus is not only the master of the symbol and the parable. He is also one who speaks in the most explicit manner possible. Take, for instance, His saying: "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." There is no doubt of His meaning when He sets out thus to make statements in the ordinary forms of speech. It is only so far as vision and symbol rise ultimately into this clearness of utterance that prophecy really comes to its own—the "forth-speaking" of that which is seen.

The ecstatic states, therefore, into which some persons fall are so far from being the natural accompaniments of prophecy, that in themselves they tend to discredit the prophetic gift so far as we understand by that gift the vision of things

"under the form of eternity." At the same time spiritualist mediums exhibit a prophetic gift of a lower order. (It is not the fact of inspiration that is interesting, but what the prophet is inspired to say. Some persons drivel by a kind of inspiration.) I cannot do better than quote the description given by Prof. James who has a right to be heard on what was in its origin an American product: "Mediumistic possession in all its grades seems to form a perfectly natural special type of alternate personality, and the susceptibility to it in some form is by no means an uncommon gift in persons who have no other obvious nervous anomaly. The phenomena are very intricate and are only just beginning to be studied in a proper scientific way. The lowest phase of mediumship is automatic writing, and the lowest grade of that is where the Subject knows what words are coming but feels impelled to write them as if from without. Then comes writing unconsciously, even whilst engaged in reading or talk. Inspirational speaking, playing on musical instruments, etc., also belong to the relatively lower phases of possession in which the normal self is not excluded from participation in the performance though their initiative seems to come from elsewhere. In the highest phase the trance is complete, the voice, language, and everything are changed, and there is no after memory whatever until the next trance comes. One curious thing about trance utterance is their generic similarity in different individuals.

The 'control' here in America is either a grotesque, slangy, and flippant personage (Indian 'controls' calling the ladies 'squaws,' the men 'braves,' the house a 'wigwam,' are excessively common), or if he ventures on higher flights he abounds in a curiously vague optimistic philosophy-and-water, in which phrases about spirit, harmony, beauty, law, progression, development, etc., keep recurring. It seems exactly as if one author composed more than half the trance messages, no matter by whom they are uttered. Whether all subconscious selves are peculiarly susceptible to a certain stratum of the *Zeitgeist*, and get their inspiration from it, I know not, but this is obviously the case with the secondary selves which become developed in spiritualist circles. There the beginnings of the medium trance are indistinguishable from those of hypnotic suggestion. The subject assumes the rôle of a medium simply because opinion expects it of him under the conditions which are present, and carries it out with a feebleness or vivacity proportionate to his histrionic gifts." [1]

Now on this description I wish to offer a few remarks. First, it seems to me that the alternation of personality is a phrase which goes beyond the minimum amount of hypothesis which, by the principle of Parsimony, we ought to employ. If we assume that the subject is susceptible to hypnotic suggestion, the cases seem to consist in

[1] *Textbook of Psychology*, 213.

the obsession by groups of ideas which, as the "control" develops, are increased and organised, and so in reality constitute the "control." In the second place, the excitement of the subject is due in part to the presence of an expectant company who crowd together to gaze on the symptoms which their own presence causes, like the loafers who gather round anyone who is taken ill in the street, and, through the contagion of their presence, increase his discomfort by shutting off the fresh air. That the group of ideas which obsess spiritualist mediums exhibit so much internal stability and again so much family likeness, points to two explanations: first, that such organised groups of ideas seem to have a kind of dependent existence, like parasitic growth upon trees; and in the next place, that they seem to derive from some common source or sources. For how anyone could be said to have an alternate personality is far from clear. I therefore prefer to suppose the personality to remain, but to be the subject of such obsession. The other circumstance suggests painfully that the oversoul may under some circumstances be not so much irrational as *derationalised*, if I may coin such a word. But there is an escape from a thought which is both alarming and also a contradiction of the order of the universe. No one who follows carefully the procedure of the medium can escape the suggestion that he is really inducing a disease upon himself. He overlays the life of the soul

with an experience which begins in hypnotic suggestion and is then cultivated by repetition. Hence he exhibits under a morbid form the action of the time-spirit which in more sane minds exerts the beneficent influences described by Wordsworth.[1] There were similar traces of this the lowest form of inspiration in the primitive church. Hence the excitement which, at Pentecost, accompanied that dawning presence of the Holy Spirit by which the Christian society was fused into the Church, had for its quite natural accompaniments those circumstances which St Luke, writing in the spirit of his age, sets in what is perhaps an undue prominence. It is strange that even the words of St Paul have not availed to put the ravings of trance at their proper value over against genuine prophecy. When he is dealing with the outburst of trance-utterances at Corinth, he says, "I had rather speak five words in the church with my reason than ten thousand words in a strange tongue." Prophecy, he affirms, consists not in speaking mysteries but "in building up the soul in comfort and consolation."[2]

We have seen that there are certain offices which are performed for thought by the pictorial imagination.[3] But unless this is controlled and guided by clearly apprehended truths, it fails to pass into the region of genuine prophetic utterance. It neither builds up nor consoles nor comforts. The greatest prophets have not always seen the

[1] P. 192, *supra*. [2] 1 Cor. xiv. [3] P. 211, *supra*.

most visions. Moses was distinguished from his contemporaries by the fact that God spoke to him neither in dark speeches nor in vision nor in dream, but mouth to mouth openly. Isaiah has but one great vision which indeed seems rather a poetic creation than anything presented to the senses.[1]

Robertson Smith tries to point out the true nature of prophecy in a compact statement. "As a rule the supreme thought which fills the prophet's soul, and which comes to him not as the result of argument but as a direct intuition of divine truth, an immediate revelation of Jehovah, is developed by the ordinary processes of the intellect."[2] Yet a contradiction lies on the surface of this statement. We cannot separate the development of the thought from the thought itself. And a thought which is of another kind than the familiar products of mind cannot therefore be developed by the "ordinary" processes of the intellect. The intuitive apprehension of the truth is precisely opposed to the slow method of the discursive reason which builds up its knowledge by a succession of percepts. The description by Mill of the difference between his own mind and Carlyle's, will again illustrate this point.[3] Let us say then that the prophet unfolds the meaning of his intuition in a mode which is more or less appropriate to it. Often, however, he is unequal to this task. Language breaks down under the

[1] Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, 220.
[2] *Ib.*, 221. [3] P. 27, *supra*.

stress that he puts upon it, and he is forced to convey his thought through symbols, in visions, and parable. Or it may even be that he is unequal to the task of expression that his intuition imposes upon him, and, like Plato, he takes refuge in figurate presentations and in myths.

It is obviously impossible, then, to describe the way in which a prophet comes to his intuition of divine truth, in a universal formula. For the truth cannot be completely separated from the mode of its apprehension, and each soul is isolated from other souls in a life which for the most part is unique.

Although, however, we cannot give an adequate account of prophetic insight, we can take note of one or two of its circumstances. There is a mysterious tie between justness of feeling and balance of apprehension. Wisdom is knowledge guided by right feeling.[1] And, therefore, "the prophetic insight into Jehovah's purpose is the insight of spiritual sympathy."[2] Now, we cannot attribute the inspiration of which in some mysterious sense men seem to be the recipients and not the originators altogether, to an external cause without at the same time referring the feelings which form the positive constituents of insight, to the same quarter. No serious psychologist can admit for a moment such an abstraction. And yet, undoubtedly, it seems rather hard to see how feeling can be communicated. Hard as it may be, however, the difficulty is no greater than the

[1] *Stones from the Quarry*, 27. [2] *Prophets of Israel*, 233.

communication of thought. Are we to speak of the oversoul as having feeling? We are bound to do so if we speak of it at all. If we suppose the oversoul to be touched with feeling, we come to the completely Christian notion of the Holy Spirit. "Because we love before all the masters of the ordinary reason, Kant, Spinoza, Schopenhauer," says Maeterlinck, "that is not a motive for repulsing the masters of a different reason which is a fraternal reason, and which will perhaps be our future reason."[1] In this way by considering the case of the individual prophet, we have reached the same conclusions as those which offered themselves when we considered the presence of the spirit in the Christian community.[2]

The common idea of prophecy is that it is equivalent with prediction. Of course, prediction separated from that intuition of truth which constitutes the credential of the prophet, can never be more than a happy hit; or, at least, there are no well certified instances which lead to a contrary opinion. The prophet declares the tendency of things in the light of his knowledge of their nature, but he does not, as a rule, know with certainty whether these tendencies will be counterbalanced by other tendencies or not. Hence it is a mistake to think of prophecy as a mere anticipation of the almanac. Time, upon which prediction turns, is not ordinarily of the essence of the truth. Jesus Himself does not seem to have prophesied His own tragic

[1] *Trésor des Humbles*, 162. [2] Pp. 62 *ff.*, *supra*.

death as something which in itself was bound to occur, but as the necessary result of His mission under the state of things then existing.

In order to understand the nature of prophecy we will take the case of a man who, in his single person, exhibited nearly all the marks which attach to the successive degrees of prophecy, Savonarola. He will exhibit, too, the workings of a truly inspired soul amid surroundings more like those of modern times, and of one who, like Blake, gave the rein to his visionary and imaginative powers.

As soon as Savonarola put on the cowl of a Dominican, he was often observed by his brother monks to be in a state of trance. When at a later time he is journeying to Florence, a mysterious stranger appears to him when he is wearied, and conducts him to his destination.[1] Three years after this "two visions were shown to him which he was forced to accept as revelations from heaven."

The night before his last advent sermon he beheld in the middle of the sky a hand bearing a sword, upon which these words were inscribed: "*Gladius Domini super terram cito et velociter.*"[2] He heard many clear and distinct voices promising mercy to the good, threatening chastisement to the wicked, and proclaiming that the wrath of God was at hand. Then suddenly the sword was turned to the earth; the sky darkened; swords, arrows, and flames rained down; terrible thunder-

[1] *Life*, Villari, 89.

[2] The Sword of the Lord upon the earth soon and quickly.

claps were heard, and all the world was a prey to war, famine, and pestilence. The vision ended with a command to Savonarola to make these things known to his hearers. A second vision appeared to him when he was preaching in San Lorenzo on Good Friday. He saw another vision in which a black cross rose from the city of Rome, and reaching the heavens stretched its arms over the whole earth. Upon the cross was written, *Crux Irae Dei*.[1] The sky was densely black, lightning flashed, thunder pealed, there came a storm of wind and hail. From the centre of Jerusalem rose a golden cross, shedding its rays over the whole world, and upon this was written, *Crux Misericordiae Dei*,[2] and all the nations flocked to adore it." Savonarola was so convinced of the authority of these and similar visions that he based his preaching on them, setting them alongside of "reason and the Bible."[3]

Savonarola's imagination was further stimulated by the uncontrolled method of his interpretation of Scripture. In addition to the literal sense, he interpreted also by reference to the spirit, to morality, to the history of the Jewish and of the Christian Church, and also by reference to the Church triumphant. "In this manner Savonarola found confirmation in the Bible for every thought, inspiration, and prophecy, that he imagined, and for all he beheld."[4] His imagination which thus

[1] The Cross of the Wrath of God.
[2] The Cross of the Mercy of God.
[3] *Life*, Villari, 154 *f.*
[4] *Ib.*, 119.

played round the literal sense of biblical statements, would find sufficient scope for nearly all its flights without leaving the limits laid down by orthodoxy. And so, instead of finding in the language of the Bible a check upon his visionary impulses, he was impelled further in the same direction.

There is a curious piece of self-revelation in which Savonarola shows that his visions are to be distinguished from mere hallucinations, and partake rather of the nature of visualised thoughts. Speaking of some of his more extravagant visions which had been sharply criticised, he says: "I did not intend to say that my mortal body had been in paradise, but only that I had seen it in mental vision. Assuredly in paradise there be neither trees nor waters, nor stairs nor doors, nor chairs; therefore, but for their ill-will, these men might easily have understood that all these scenes were *formed in my mind by angelic intervention.*" There is a family likeness between these experiences of Savonarola and the visions of Blake, and we can compare with this utterance of Savonarola a precisely similar one which Blake made (p. 217). In both men the visionary is partly the master, partly the servant of what he sees. But we now come to this remarkable fact; that the thoughts which in this way derived partly from the Florentine's own initiative, partly from an external source—whatever that source may have been, whether it was rooted in past

experience, or derived from an ideal which operated as something given—guided him to forecast the future of Italy in a most marvellous manner. He not only had the prophetic insight by which he could read the signs of the times; he was also endowed with a foresight through which he read the future in a manner for which the commonplace considerations of psychology fail to account, and we are forced to take refuge in terms like "inspiration," or "the influence of the oversoul," phrases which do not so much solve a problem as set it before us to be solved.

It is perhaps impossible to account for a gift of this kind, any more than for other endowments of a genius. But we can at least note in Savonarola some circumstances which afforded to such a gift free exercise. He was steeped in the *Summa* of St Thomas Aquinas, through which the tradition of classical philosophy and the austere passion of the Scriptures were focussed upon him. He had no interests outside his vocation; and his vocation, in form at least, was that of seeking the best things. The simplicity of his mode of life, which is symbolised for the traveller to Florence in that cell at St Mark's, saved him from the social futilities in which the lowest sets the measure for the highest. But neither his studies nor his vocation nor his ascetic temper withdrew him from affairs and the beauty of the world. He "opened schools for the study of painting, sculpture and architecture, and for the art of transcribing and illuminat-

ing manuscripts."[1] Yet his powers best displayed themselves in public affairs. He not only devised a constitution for his city which commended itself as the best possible one to the greatest thinkers of his time ; he also induced his countrymen to put it into practice. His isolated predictions fall into the background as we set before our eyes the magnificence of this, the greatest achievement of Savonarola. The reformer makes credible the gifts of the prophet. His mind like an Æolian harp hung amid the trees of his own Florence, returned answering echoes to the breath of the Spirit.

At the beginning of this series of studies I ventured to hope that in the light of the religious experience studied upon its concrete and actual side, we should understand somewhat better the workings of the minds, which under a too narrow view, had been set down as diseased. After we have seen in Savonarola a combination of the visionary and the statesman, we shall be able to approach the character of Cromwell with the sympathy which is necessary to understand it. I do not mean by sympathy that we are to take a partisan view of the great Protector, but that we are to see in him that mixture of gold and dross which in its varying degrees forms the good man and the bad man alike. "In the worst men there is something of good, and the best are not without a tinge of depravity."[2] Dean Church, when he is review-

[1] *Life*, by Villari, 165. [2] Tertullian, *de anima*, 41.

ing Carlyle's *Life of Cromwell*, takes offence at the scriptural colouring of Cromwell's vocabulary, and is on the verge of stigmatising it as cant.[1] The fact of the matter seems to be that the *Old Testament* furnished to Cromwell and his supporters (as it has done to Kruger and the Boers), a philosophy of history and politics which was at once simple and figurate, while his opponents were conversant with the abstract ideas of the schoolmen and their complex casuistry. Whenever a man's life gets out of gear with his professions he uses cant, and Cromwell's friends had no monopoly of it. The Puritan conscience was like other consciences ; it became stretched in the wear and tear of political conflicts.

Cromwell deserves the name of prophet for a twofold reason. His philosophy of life drawn from the *Old Testament*—crude and partial and inflexible as it was—was a truer exponent of the English spirit than the statecraft and management which grew up round the court of the Stuarts. In the second place, he gave a lead to a powerful class hitherto silent and unacknowledged, and so unsealed a fountain of energy which little by little began to pulse through the nation's veins, until the national youth was renewed.

In studying the careers of the Florentine and the English reformers, we are met by one or two striking points of agreement. Firstly, the ambition for a cause tends to pass into a personal ambition, and the slight passed upon the man

[1] *Occasional Papers*, i. 25.

gains the aspect of a wrong done to his principles. George Eliot in *Romola* has suggested the lines along which even Savonarola moved towards arbitrary and tyrannical methods. Florence became restive under a religious dictatorship. England had to endure a religious dictatorship doubled with a military one. No prophet has a monopoly of the truth which he is called upon to declare, and the temporary victory of a party is dearly purchased at the price of freedom and honesty, neither man nor party being necessary to the triumph of truth. Hence there is no reason for regret that the Protectorate of Cromwell formed but an episode in the political history of England. His ideas were carried out with more caution and more efficiency by the Whig statesmen of the next century. Cromwell and his supporters were carried away by religious enthusiasm, but they cared very little for freedom of thought. This complement of religious liberty had to wait for the less enthusiastic but wiser advocacy of men like Locke.

The religious partisan is often ready to sacrifice the free personalities of his fellows so that his own favourite type of the religious life may prevail; and, in seeking to attain this end, such men refuse to the subjects of their handling the compliment of sincere and candid utterance. Popular prejudice has identified the Society of Jesus with these two failings. As a matter of fact, St Ignatius simply reduced to system the method by which religious propaganda has for the most part moved. For

these two qualities are the usual accompaniments of the enthusiasm which alone is able to move the world ; and the spirit which has reached the standpoint of complete toleration in matters of thought, and of impartial pursuit of the truth, serves no longer under the banner of partisan religion, but has reached the standpoint of quietism, and of the scientific method. Hence we must take account of the limits which the religious spirit imposes in these two directions.

Newman, therefore, in marking off his opposition to Liberalism, draws attention to an intrinsic attitude of the religious spirit. Since the thirties, the principle of *laissez faire* has translated into politics the doctrine of the unlimited freedom of the individual, and has disclosed its own imperfections. Human beings, in the abstract, have no rights, but only as members of an organised society ; and the religious propaganda which attempts to bring them into social relations of a special kind, involves, therefore, a certain intrusion upon the hitherto unlimited activities of the individual.

In the second place, religion, so far as it rests upon preferences and judgments of value, emphasises certain aspects of truth, and so deserts the neutral standpoint of science. Or to use Schopenhauer's convenient distinction, the sufficient reason sought by science is of one kind, that of religion is of another kind.

How then are we to reconcile this opposition of religion and freedom ? The religious spirit seems

to stand in an apparent hostility to that freedom and love of truth upon which are laid the foundations of modern civilisation. May we reconcile the opposition in this way, namely, that religion must attain its ends without sacrificing either the personality of the individual, or doing violence to truth? Religion must exercise its compulsion by means which leave unaffected the civil freedom of the individual; it must attract rather than impel. In the second place, the preferences which it marks off as its own are conditioned by the objective system of truth, in which the scientific method moves.

Hence, further, it is clear that the specifically religious spirit requires to be checked on the one hand by the love of civil freedom, and on the other by the scientific spirit. Apart from these checks religion degenerates into a tyranny over both body and mind. It would appear from this that the more wholesome tone of religious life which characterises Teutonic countries is not due to the form of their religious life since it does not contain within itself its own checks. For example, the republic of Geneva, under the government of Calvin, was despotic in the extreme. Yet it did its work in spite of the offences which liberty suffered. Protestantism, therefore, is not the cause of the freedom which we enjoy. Rather both Protestantism and the civil life of Protestant nations are referable to the peculiar genius of the nations which have embraced Protestantism. Or to put the same thing in another way, Protestantism translates into

the religious life those institutions which express and guarantee the freedom of the individual in civil life. Yet for all that it is not clear that the religious life is capable of being entirely transformed after this manner. The attempt is sometimes made to determine problems of taste on the lines of universal suffrage, an attempt which always fails. For in the fine arts it is the opinion of the connoisseur that counts. In the same way it would seem that in the more searching value-judgments of the religious spirit, the principle of authority has a wider scope than is always allowed in a free state. Liberty runs into extremes and needs the restraint of religion.

In the next place the religious temper is directed to other ends than the scientific temper. The former passes judgments of value; the latter, judgments of fact. The religious spirit, therefore, is not affected, except incidentally, by changes in the subject matter upon which it operates. At the same time the scientific spirit has created for itself an immense and increasing field of knowledge for which the religious spirit does not supply the necessary instruments, and the limits are marked off quite clearly to which the religious spirit is forced to submit. The Protestant, until the last few years, has attempted to shut his eyes to this fact by a forced interpretation of the Scriptures. The Roman Catholic has shelved the business of reconciling the two methods by referring their differences to an external authority.

We are now in a position to understand more clearly the nature of prophecy. It announces estimates of the true worth of things which are not yet clearly realised. Jesus began His preaching by declaring the advent of whole classes of men—the meek, the poor, the persecuted—to consideration and power throughout the world, just as Cromwell brought to view the worth of the middle classes in England. He did not prescribe one form of political constitution rather than another; and historically the Christian religion is reconcilable with many forms of polity. For example, the conversion of India to Christianity, supposing it to be carried out, would not necessarily fit the peoples of India for self-government. And it is not certain that the Russian Government is mistaken in its extreme suspicion and hostility towards western ideas. The political element in Protestant forms of Church government makes the Protestant churches the allies of freedom in free countries. It is an interesting problem to enquire how far they are adapted to introduce the Christian religion to savage or to subject races. The missionary efforts of the present are not comparable in success to the conversion of the Franks, the Celts, the Teutons, the Slavs, by a church which spoke with the accents of dogmatic authority and offered a visible system of sacramental grace. And, on the other hand, the religious life among the Christianised negroes of North America falls far short of the hopes that missionary enterprise

suggests. Evangelical Protestantism speaks as man to man, and assumes, therefore, that a great part of its work has already been done for it. But there are peoples who need tutelage, and cannot walk alone. The *constitution*[1] of the Roman Church, then, which is really the absolutism of a government like that of Russia translated into terms of religion, may be more suited to peoples which have not yet passed beyond the absolute form of government, and are still in the condition of tutelage. For before conscience can be paramount in the individual life it must already be realised in part in social institutions, and in most cases finds an external form in the opinion of the Christian society. It is questionable whether the converts to Christianity among savage races can enter upon the moral life without the support of this opinion as interpreted for them by a recognised and authoritative teacher.

What, then, is required for the conversion of India or of Africa is not merely the presentation of the Christian religion in the social and political guise in which it is adapted to the most civilised nations in the world, but the use of means which answer to and express the character of those to whom it is offered. Miss Kingsley has pointed out the danger of treating the natives of Africa from the standpoint of modern Europe.

[1] I am not speaking now of dogma.

Note.—For the subject-matter of this chapter, see Vaughan, *Stones from the Quarry*, Sermon V.

CHAPTER XI

ILLUMINATION AND PROGRESS

Metaphor in religious definitions—Legal metaphor supplemented by the mystics—Will, as natural process (i)—As more than natural process (ii)—Individual will and will of society—Self-culture a contradiction—Progress a social fact—Conversion and progress—Evangelical idea too narrow—Imitation of enthusiasm by spasmodic conversion—Sin inevitable—Detachment and solitude—Use of asceticism—Scientific knowledge and theological progress.

NEARLY all the language of religious definition and description consists of metaphors, comparisons, thrown out at certain elusive and sometimes inscrutable experiences. The relation of the soul to God has been viewed mainly in two ways. The one way is to compare Him with light illumining an object. There are many traces of this in the older Jewish literature; and when Jewish and Greek thought flowed together in one stream, the famous figure in the *Republic* of Plato, where the Idea of the Good is compared with the sun in the visible world, reinforced the language of the Jewish hymn-writers and seers. The other way is to view the relation between God and the soul through the analogies of the law court. God is either the judge or the prosecutor or the plaintiff, and the soul is the

prisoner at the bar. It is to the legal bent of the mind of St Paul that the forensic turn of so much Christian theology is due, and thousands of writers have occupied themselves in rabbinical disquisitions upon justification without contributing one new thought either to religion or to law. The reason is not far to seek. The soul stands over against God as a personality which is at the same time dependent. And theologians have been engaged on the impossible task of reducing all the intimacies which grow out of this relationship to a single type. The good citizen moves through life in a well-ordered state without entering the precincts of the law court, at any rate as a criminal. And theologians have treated the whole human race as if it were simply criminal, and nothing more. The same genius for law which built up the Roman code threw itself upon the analogous aspect of the religious life. It is worthy of notice that " the doctrines of reconciliation and justification are precisely those which have found their development exclusively in (the western) portion of the Church,"[1] that is to say, in that part where Roman, as opposed to Greek, influences have prevailed. Again, it is precisely upon these doctrines that the first distinctly Protestant theology was directed. Even the kingdom of God becomes in the theology of Calvin a huge system of arbitrary police, of which the government of Geneva offered the earthly type.

[1] Ritschl, *History of Justification and Reconciliation*, 21.

Compare with this monotonous harping on one string the celestial harmony of the parables of Jesus, in which mankind is figured as the husbandman in a field ; the returning prodigal ; the housewife looking for the lost coin ; the seeker after hidden treasure ; the petitioner of an unjust judge ; while the more gloomy comparisons seem to have been directed not so much against the whole world as against the nation that rejected Him.

Mystical writers, by their comparisons, have supplemented and enriched the arid method of more formal theologians, and Ritschl fails to do them justice when he says that "the so-called mystical form of religious ideas is wont to rest upon the reduction of relations which pertain to the will, to the forms of a natural process."[1] *The Song of Songs*, with its glowing human passion, does not fall under Ritschl's condemnation, and it has been largely used by the mystics in their descriptions. God is portrayed by them under the form of a lover as worthily as under the form of a barrister at the criminal bar. And then as to the rest of Ritschl's statement, there is a twofold aspect of the will which requires to be brought out by two corresponding modes of expression. While the relations which pertain to the will must be capable of reduction to the forms of a natural process, this does not exhaust the meaning of "will." On the one side, the will is conditioned by, or rather enters into, a chain of cause and effect, and is thus

[1] Ritschl, *History of Justification and Reconciliation*, 8.

comparable in its changes to natural processes, although at the same time it is itself a unique natural process. On the other hand, it is a natural process which is conscious of itself and so seems to rise beyond the natural order. Hence we may say that so far as the will is determined it may be illustrated by analogies from nature ; so far as it is self-conscious or " free," it discloses itself in moral relations of which the legal relation is a somewhat unimportant type.

We have already traced some of the experiences of the soul on the side of the aspiration towards God : we shall now consider the love of the soul towards God as it translates itself into specific modes of life ; and in so doing we shall try to keep in view the double aspect of this aspiration, as comparable to a natural process on the one hand, and as self-initiated on the other.

But the will in this twofold aspect is realised in the Christian society of which it is not the originator but the offspring. The Christian Church like the State is not to be regarded as the mere sum of individuals, but as the organism of which the individual is a member ; and in the Christian life no less than in the life of the State, we must take account of the factor through which the individual is no longer isolated but taken up into something higher. This factor reveals itself as a common ideal to which the society tends, an ideal not so much possessing reality as claiming it, and subduing the society to itself. But in

the realm of the spirit this claim to existence is *as good as existence.* Or, in other words, it is only so far as the individual lays hold upon and realises this common ideal, that he can be said to exist in the moral world at all. Hence, in coming to itself, individuality is transcended by something higher. The scientific man loses himself in acquiring the objective temper of science; the artist in realising an ideal beauty; the Christian in realising the kingdom of heaven.

In this ideal, man and God come together. We may speak either of the movement of this ideal towards man, as a light that breaks in upon him, or of his movement towards it, as though he were drawn by it. Some readers may take alarm at what they may consider statements without foundation. Yet, however we express ourselves now, we can rest upon certain facts; that there is an ideal; that it is appropriated by the soul; that as so appropriated it seems to constitute the true being of the soul; that it does not arise in the soul left to itself and apart from the company of other human beings; that therefore it is superinduced upon the soul.

The notion of self-culture lays an unreal stress upon the individual, as though in his solitary discipline he were already at hand in the fulness of his being, and could come to complete satisfaction within the limits of his own nature. In the light of history this notion of self-culture does not satisfy. Culture itself is a social product,

and self-culture, therefore, is a contradiction. As soon as we realise this inadequacy of the soul to account for itself from within, we are thrown upon the notion of Another towards Whom we move, and Who draws us. We need not scruple when we talk of the Ideal about using terms which refer to persons. In the natural world we are concerned with things; in the world of spirit things do not count except in their relation to persons. Hence it would be inaccurate to speak of an ideal as a thing at all, unless, indeed, we dwell upon a part of it isolated from the rest.

Spiritual progress, therefore, is not like a series of states developing themselves entirely from within. It consists rather in going beyond one's first self and so finding one's ultimate self. This last phrase of going beyond one's self is to be taken in a plain and not in a paradoxical sense. The interaction of individual beings in a realm of persons involves a transcending of self which is at the same time an affirmation of self in the highest form possible.

Now this self-transcending can take place only in relation to other persons. Hence it is a false show of self-sacrifice when it is performed in partial or complete isolation, as in the cloister or the hermitage. Hence further the importance of humanitarian love in the religious scheme, such love being, as it were, the condition by which alone the spiritual life, in its true sense, is made possible. Let me use an illustration from

physiology. The office of the blood, it is said, is to furnish a special environment for all the constituent organs of the body, an environment in which they live and from which they draw their nourishment. In the same way humanitarian love may be said to be the life-stream in which the Christian virtues flourish. Now under some conditions the cloister, and even the cell, have been the only places where the Christian ideal could be pursued, inasmuch as the world still "lay in the wicked one." But obviously the growth of the Christian character is much more rounded and complete when it takes place in the fulness of social life than when it is forced in the atmosphere of an exclusive community.

We can now draw an important inference about conversion. It is surely clear from the general course of our discussion that in a Christian country, under ordinary circumstances, there can be marked off no such absolute beginning of the religious life as is ordinarily understood in conversion. In conversion the spiritual impulse becomes conscious of itself in a special degree, but it must be there before it can become conscious of itself. Hence conversion is rather to be viewed as marking a stage in a progress which has already been begun, and not as the absolute beginning.

Further, the fundamental importance of love as a spiritual motive has caused it to be viewed as equal to the whole of the spiritual life, as though a mere aspiration towards God exhausted the

whole range of possibility in this sphere. Hence the extravagant language which the leaders of some religious revivals have indulged in, as though there was nothing more to be sought in the spiritual life beyond a bare aspiration. But unless the aspiration of the soul towards God is translated into its different forms and effects, it tends to die away into a mechanical and barren turn of mind. This seems to be the weak point in the current Evangelical view of the Christian life, and has been pointed out with great emphasis by Dr Dale.[1] When once the individual has made public profession of the aspiration towards God in the act of conversion, he is encouraged to induce as many others as possible to the same act, and is at once caught up into a social machinery directed towards this one purpose. From this somewhat narrow view of the divine nature and the divine purpose, there follow the intellectual barrenness which distinguishes so strangely the Evangelical movement. It has contributed little or nothing to theology, nothing to the science of ethics,[2] and has stood aloof from and discouraged science, poetry, philosophy, and the fine arts. The answer is sometimes made that the method has succeeded. So also has the society of Jesus, which unites to a like mediocrity of standard, a patronage of culture even more fatal to its object than the traditional opposition of some religious schools. To identify

[1] *Life*, 349. [2] *Ib.*, 348.

the glory of God with a single aim, laudable in itself as it may be, whether it be the prosperity of a religious order or the universal prevalence of one temper of mind, is to deny part of the divine nature and to be a partial atheist.

For God is interpreted through our apprehension of Him, and our knowledge is limited by our capacity to receive Him. "Simple people," says Eckhart, "conceive that we are to see God as if He stood on that side and we on this. It is not so: God and I are one in the act of my perceiving Him."[1]

The passion of religious enthusiasm, nevertheless, is the main factor in religious progress. "Enthusiasm may do much harm and act at times absurdly, but calculation never made a hero."[2] Now there is a curious imitation of this enthusiasm to which reference has already been made, namely, the impulses which suggestion creates in weak minds by a kind of hypnotism;[3] and although this is a beneficent contrivance by which weakness takes refuge under the shadow of the Cross, it is not here that we are to look for the genuine exhibition of religious passion. Not only so, the facility with which as we are told conversion may be effected in five minutes, makes the successful missioner somewhat inclined to assimilate sounder but more recalcitrant material to the same process. It is by a very natural

[1] Quoted by Tauler, *Life and Sermons*, E. trans., 80.
[2] Newman, *Essay on Development*, 329. [3] P. 118, *supra*.

reaction against such valetudinarianism that healthy natures have shrunk from the religious profession altogether. Some of the most manly spirits have preferred to keep locked up in their own breast the affection which the person of Jesus inevitably inspires, rather than to give a handle for the intrusion of religious busybodies upon what is infinitely sacred.

But in a richly endowed emotional nature the waking of the religious spirit to self-consciousness is quite unlike the caricature which springs up in the revival meeting, and rather resembles the unsealing of the fountains of the deep. Along with the new affection there comes "a new strength and might in all powers outward and inward."[1] And the feelings which urge on to new fields of action also direct towards new fields of truth. Such pure fires of love kindle an explosion of light. To be freed from the blinding effects of a sordid self-interest in its various kinds, leaves the glance of the spirit clear for a wider outlook.

Yet no finality can be attained even through the deepest love. The soul is never dispensed from the effort which each new situation and the corresponding duty impose upon it. But it is impossible to be quite certain always what one's duty is, and we are not always sincere with ourselves in determining it. Hence it may be laid down as an axiom of the spiritual life that the conduct even of the best men is tinged with sin.

[1] Tauler, *op. cit.*, 46.

(I say of the spiritual life, because the conditions of outward conduct imposed, first by positive law and then by social custom, are relatively easy to fulfil by the person of a truly good intention.) Here, after all, is the partial justification of the forensic view of the attitude of God to man. Man is for ever condemned and drawn forward by his ideals. Hence, too, the Christian Church can never claim to be perfect over against a sinful world. Hence, again, the intentions must be submitted to the most searching scrutiny if we are to avoid self-deception. And yet—so difficult is right conduct—it is dangerous to carry this scrutiny further than the larger issues of life, or else action is paralysed altogether.

But such refinements as these are not for most men. The schooling of self to obey the plain law of conduct is enough to task and to exhaust all their energies. In their despair of attaining self-mastery even amid the usual surroundings of life, men have fled to special means, to self-torture and solitude, that they might win this indispensable victory.

It is to be borne in mind that the populations among whom the Christian religion first spread, were like the neighbouring Semitic nations which "know no mean between asceticism and unrestrained self-indulgence."[1] And although the more northern nations are also, on the whole, more temperate, this is only partially true. It

[1] Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, 91.

may be said of the working classes in England to-day that in great part "they know no mean between asceticism and unrestrained self-indulgence" so far as intoxicants are concerned. The teetotal movement, therefore, is analogous in every way to the monastic system as an expedient in face of an incurably weak will. And although the monastic system has shown itself susceptible to the gravest abuses, it seems to have been a witness to ideals of conduct higher than those which at the time could be attained in daily life. It is true that the genius of the Teutonic races for family life puts to shame the artificial virtues of the monastery; but it is not certain that the tone of the monastery was as bad as that of the market and street. "I do not believe," says Dr Jessopp, "that any man of common fairness and candour could rise from the examination" (of the historical evidence) "with any other impression than that as a body the monks of the thirteenth century were better than their age. Vicious and profligate, drunken and unchaste as a class they certainly were not."[1] The true weakness of the monastic system lies in another direction than this. In the first place, it withdraws from public life precisely that class of persons who should be engaged in it. Who can say, for instance, how much contemporary France and Spain and Italy are suffering from the retirement of just those persons in whom reflection and self-criticism are strongest? In the

[1] *Coming of the Friars*, 139.

second place, the monastic life tends, like academic life, to drop from its high profession down to trivial gossip and disputes, precisely for lack of those absorbing interests which are found in the intercourse of politics and social life. If these limits of monasticism are borne in mind, there are some things to be said for the life in common of persons of one way of thinking. It is easier to maintain unpopular and unfashionable standards of thought and practice with the aid even of a small environment. The university settlements in large towns are adaptations of the monastic system to modern circumstances ; and under a conscientious and able administrator many a mediæval monastery must have been, in its way, a similar centre of good works and more or less sound learning.

In one detail the mediæval monastery was strikingly modern. Its inmates knew to the full that weariness which is sometimes thought to be a product of the nineteenth century. In the pilgrimage of the spirit this weariness has been already dealt with under the name of the dark night of the soul.[1] Souls less serious than others were content to yawn through long periods of ennui. St Bernard complains of those who would sleep in choir.[2]

But there were orders of a stricter rule, in which the likeness between the life of the cloister and of the world almost disappeared, orders in which every means was taken to repress natural inclina-

[1] P. 126, *supra*. [2] *Serm.* vii.

tions. There is no need here to describe in detail the arrangements made with this end in the regulations of the stricter orders such as the Carmelites and Carthusians. What is of more interest, is to note that individuals living in the world have used special disciplines. For example, "Sir Thomas More," says an unknown biographer, "used often to punish his body with discipline, especially every Friday, great saints' eves, and at the four times of Ember week, with whips made of knotted cords. He used to wear a cilice (*i.e.* hair shirt), yea, often when he sat as High Chancellor in judgment seat. But because he would not be noted of singularity, he conformed himself outwardly to other men of the same state and vocation. This no person did know but his daughter Margaret, whom he best trusted: causing her sometime, as need required, to wash his shirt of hair."[1] So far as the needs of the body seem to hamper human freedom, it is at least comprehensible how the wish to assert this freedom should lead to practices like those of the Chancellor of Henry the Eighth. Nor is it just to ascribe them to the wish to be laying up a store of merit. They are simply one of the many forms in which religious scruples express themselves. Moreover they are not without a practical value. There is no need perhaps to go as far as Sir Thomas More, but something of the kind is recommended by one of the most genial of living men, William James. He offers as "a final practical

[1] Wordsworth, *Ecclesiastical Biography*, ii. 82.

maxim": "*Keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day.* That is, be systematically ascetic or heroic in little unnecessary points ; do every day or two something for no other reason than that you would rather not do it, so that when the hour of dire need draws nigh it may find you not unnerved and untrained to stand the test."[1] It may be affirmed, therefore, that a touch of austerity is natural to any complete religious system. Those who scout it in religion, employ it themselves in business and sport. It is not true, as some would say, that daily life always offers enough opportunities for self-repression, although perhaps it does so in the majority of cases. Our national love of comfort places many persons, especially in the well-to-do classes, in positions where the friction of life is reduced to a minimum ; and the consequence is that such persons pass their lives in an atmosphere of unreality.

The office of ascetic practices is to enable the spirit to rise above dependence upon its surroundings, so that it may see beneath its feet "every fear, inexorable fate, and the dread tumult of death." But after all, this is a somewhat mechanical method ; and the same end is attained more quickly by the impulse of aspiration, or by the contemplative temper.

Detachment from external conditions is sometimes sought under the form of a desire for solitude, solitude being necessary alike for recollec-

[1] *Textbook of Psychology*, 149.

tion and speculation. The practice of solitude is indeed one form of asceticism, and is also a condition of spiritual advance. A great part of the misery of the poor comes from the fact that their lives are spent so much in common owing to their confined surroundings ; and so they fall into a restless habit, for which companionship and gossip is at once the satisfaction and the further stimulus ; while the cheap magazine is as it were gossip continued into moments of solitude, the clamour of the mob trespassing upon the divine silence.

We have dealt already with another mode of progress, under the head of aspiration. Alongside of aspiration and ascetic practices there comes, as the third mode of progress in the spiritual life, the acquisition of knowledge. It would seem possible, though not necessary, that a mind which is perpetually conversant with the order of nature, must get attuned at the same time to the moral order. However this may be, the discipline which is offered by scientific investigation, produces a certain modesty and self-control, which is indistinguishable from the sanctity of the noblest saints. There are few names in the calendar which suggest personalities as attractive as those of Spinoza and Darwin. Unfortunately the benefits conferred by devotion to theology and to literature appear to be of a somewhat more mixed kind. The wranglings of controversialists in religion, and the acerbity of the great English scholars, are sometimes excused ; but the patience and the confessed

ignorance that go with the advance of natural science into the unknown, furnish a check which is sadly needed by the theologian and the scholar, for whom so much rests upon arbitrary conjecture. On the other hand, when the knowledge of natural science is acquired at second hand by persons who have not observed for themselves—a method which has been stereotyped in the regulations of the Science and Art Department—the very certainty and completeness of scientific statement as far as it goes, renders the natural sciences, when pursued in this way, inferior as a discipline to the less certain and less dogmatic methods of literature and history. The type of mind which it is producing, falls far short of the expectations which the advocates of scientific education have encouraged. For it unites the faults of superficiality and self-satisfied dogmatism. The results of this misuse of natural science are seen in the trend of general opinion. The prevailing temper of the public is one for which knowledge of the laws of nature is simply the means that there may be more to eat and drink and wear; and it overlooks altogether the true meaning of scientific training. It is sufficiently rebuked in a saying of Comte, "The loftiest aim of all the sciences is not to minister to the arts of life, but to satisfy the fundamental necessity of the intellect to know the laws of phenomena."

It is not to be expected that persons who neglect the profounder aspects of natural science and disdain the philosophic method of reflection,

should in theology say much worth listening to. And so Dale could declare, with an irony of which he was, perhaps, not unconscious: "I can see no signs that we are on the eve of discovering any great provinces of religious truth that have hitherto been unknown to us."[1] Serious reflection, in which truth is sought without prepossession, is neither useful for trade, nor does it bear immediately upon conduct; and so we must join with Dale in the expectation that theology is not going to revive in England at present. "To the earlier neglect, and to the recent disparagement of Christian Dogma as a scientific study, I attribute very much of the poverty and confusion of theological thought, very much of the religious uncertainty, and some of the more serious defects in the practical religious life of our churches which are causing anxiety to many, and to some, serious alarm."[2] Hence, alongside of aspiration and of ascetic practices, the method of speculation also is a way to God, a way which should be the special characteristic of the present age.

The scrupulous attempt to reach the truth as far as possible, is always misunderstood by those for whom the love of the truth for its own sake is incomprehensible. Even Dale was accused of being a Jesuit; and it is maintained by some that, in spite of the *Apologia*, Newman must be considered to fall below our English standard of veracity. "I kept guarding," says St Augustine,

[1] *Life*, 624. [2] *Ib.*, 573.

"in my inner perception the integrity of my perceptions; and in the trifling thoughts which are suggested by trifling things, I was delighted in the truth."[1] There are very few persons who can say honestly what is said here, and yet only such persons have any right to sit in judgment upon Newman and Dale.

The progress of the soul in these three directions which we have considered, is also effective in realising the divine nature. By love the soul regards God as a Person; through the efforts which are involved in moral discipline it learns to see in Him the Master of souls; through the scientific apprehension it finds in Him, on the one hand, the immanent ground of things, and on the other, their compelling ideal. We have seen how God is related to the soul as a Person; in the next chapter we shall consider the conduct of the moral life through which His nature as a moral guide is revealed; while in the last chapter we shall try to sum up under the head of mystical theology such other conclusions about His nature as seem to be accessible upon the lines of the investigation which we have pursued.

[1] *Conf.* i. 20.

CHAPTER XII

DIRECTION, CONFESSION, CASUISTRY

The freedom and dependence of the soul—The latter emphasised in mediæval system—Relation to obedience, humility, and docility—Character of clericalism—Quietism—Direction—Secrecy—Veracity—Its limits—Casuistry—Its limits—Direction in the spiritual life—Qualities of a director.

THERE are two related aspects of the soul of which account must be taken in any view of the religious life which aims at completeness. On the one hand, the soul is capable of a certain amount of initiative, and from the feeling of this power there arises the sense of spiritual freedom. Hence it is that where Church organisation represses the individual, or refuses him adequate expression, there is a reaction and a tendency to form new religious bodies. This tendency is often most vigorous where the religious spirit is most alive. It is in England, America, and Russia, that there is at the same time the greatest intensity and the widest differences of religious opinion.

On the other hand, even the most self-reliant feel at times the need of an object upon which to lean. Those who have carried themselves the

most bravely before the world have sought now and then, in private it may be, some person to support them against that terrible sense of weakness and isolation which rebukes even the strongest heart at times. This sense of weakness is, therefore, an intrinsic character of the soul. It is also the spring of many excellences.

There is a special reason why we should dwell upon this topic. The fundamental difference between the two chief parties at the Reformation was not so much one of doctrine as of practice. The mediæval Church with its compact organisation had encroached gradually upon the freedom of the individual until he was as clay in the hands of an ecclesiastical caste. Even as early as St Chrysostom the claims of the priesthood reached a pitch beyond which nothing further remained. "Men who had their abode and occupation in the world were entrusted with the control of celestial things, and received a power which God gave neither to angels nor to archangels. For it has not been said to them, 'whatsoever ye bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever things ye loose shall be loosed.' For the rulers of the earth have power to bind upon earth, but only over the body, but this bond lays hold upon the soul and passes through the heavens; whatever the priests do below is confirmed by God in heaven, and the Master affirms the intention of His servants." And again, "the interval between the pastor and those over whom he exercises pastoral care

is as great as that which holds between man as a rational being and the irrational creatures."[1] In a similar spirit St Bernard speaks with concern of "those who dare to tread the ways of life without a guide and preceptor, being at once disciples and masters in the spiritual life."[2]

The Reformers had not to deal with an ideal system in which, as Father John of Cronstadt says, the priest is an angel and not a man, but with one in which the defenders of the priesthood were content if they could prove that priests were no worse than other people. A class which undertakes the direction of the conscience and does not rise above the average character, is on the way to giving occasion of scandal. But there is no need to rake up the faults of the ecclesiastics of the sixteenth century, in order that we may find objections to the direction of the consciences of all mankind by any class whatever. The qualities required in a director are of such a kind that they can only be found now and then.

At the same time, the gain which has come from increased religious freedom has not been unmixed with loss. There are some virtues which can only flourish when the relation of dependence —which is not less real than the freedom of the soul—is expressed in the positive organisation of life. Obedience, docility, and humility are often enjoined upon others by persons who would turn them to account; but for all that they have their

[1] Chrys., *de sacerd.*, 94, 183. [2] *Sermon*, 77.

place. And although in exaggeration these virtues issue in superstition and servility, the absence of them results in restlessness, in discourtesy, and in the ignorant self-assertion which is fatal to the finer graces of mind and spirit.

We have already seen how humility is connected with a genuine self-knowledge; it has also a bearing upon practice. In the form of a readiness to repress oneself it passes into obedience. "There is no obedience," says St Teresa, "where there is no resolution to suffer." [1] The Jesuits have carried to its furthest pitch the cultivation of an obedience which does not, as in the case of a soldier, stop with the external act, but reaches the very depths of the soul. And in this way they have carried out a great psychological experiment. The uniform character of mind which is thus produced issues, of necessity, in that mediocrity to which reference has been made. But we must not make this stereotyped character into an insuperable objection against the spiritual exercises of Loyola. The mediocrity in question is the form which is taken by that sacrifice of self, to which the rules of Ignatius lead. But, in a less degree, a similar self-limitation is involved in all human organisation; and it will be found that this is a tax that must be paid universally. The unconscious compulsion of social life keeps each man more or less to his calling and office in the community, and refuses him the free exercise of

[1] *Life*, xxvi. 4.

all his powers. There is therefore a certain natural grace in accepting the position in which we are placed, affirming on the one hand our own rights, and, on the other hand, respecting the claims of others. The discontent which is the motive power of much necessary social reform, is when carried into daily life, fatal to its usual courtesies.

Along with the self-control which makes it possible to fall into one's place, and to obey, there goes the readiness to learn and what answers to it in the realm of practice, the willingness to confess to an error. "I beseech you," Cromwell wrote to the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland, "think it possible you may be mistaken."[1] When this temper is carried into politics, it leads to an opportunism which is the precise opposite of that tendency to act upon a few principles which Mill has described as doctrinairism. The opportunist judges each case upon its merits as far as possible in the light of general moral principles. The doctrinaire applies a formula which is inflexible and indifferent to the context in which it is used. From opportunism in the sense which we have described, there arises that quality in ecclesiastical statesmanship which baffles the secular critic. The rough and ready standards of the ordinary mind can be made the subject of foresight and calculation. But when the moral judgment is freely applied without reference to party divisions, such calculation becomes

[1] Carlyle, *Life and Letters of Cromwell*, letter cxxxvi.

impossible. On the other hand, the course of the ecclesiastical politician does not move *in vacuo*. He, too, has his interests, his party, to defend, while he perplexes his opponents and rivals by the subtlety of his motives and his combinations. At the same time, owing to the natural limitations of his life, being cut off from the clash of contending wills and the discipline of business, he falls short in some respects of the usual standards of public affairs, as in many respects he passes beyond them. And although the prejudice against the political churchman is partly due to his claim to act from high motives, it is not without warrant in the actual experience. "St Bernard," Dean Church tells us, "is a warning to all Christian explorers and expounders of truth—a warning all the more emphatic for the singular disinterestedness of his purpose and the success of much that he attempted—not to be tempted by the influence which their work in retirement has given them, into those entangling and difficult paths of public activity from which, when a man has once entered upon them, it is hard to draw back, and in which it is so easy for the thinker, the divine, the teacher, to pass into the religious partisan, the religious manager and meddler and contriver, forgetting at once in the purity and elevation of his purpose and in the intoxication of his success the inherent snares and danger of power in any human hands." [1]

[1] *Occasional Essays*, i. 237.

If docility leads to opportunism in the prime movers of affairs, it leads also to pliancy in their instruments; and combines with the obedience already noted to render an ecclesiastical party far more formidable than its numbers would lead one to expect. At the same time, such a party is often itself deceived into an exaggeration of its resources. A momentary failure brings the whole complex organisation to the ground, and contemporaries viewing the scattered components are surprised that so few should have wielded such power. Of this quality mediæval architecture furnishes a parable, as it took the small stones which were not enough for the builders of antiquity, and lifted them into pointed arches and vaults, from which if one voussoir is removed the whole collapses.

Just as the Romanist party exhibited in this concrete fashion the finer flower of its characteristic qualities, so on the other hand the Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were distinguished by a rugged independence in which human freedom finds a majestic, if gaunt expression. The admiration which is deservedly given to the Roman *organisation* finds its counterpart in the impressiveness of the *individual* character of many of the Reformers. On the other hand, if the Romanist has sacrificed the individual to social qualities, the opposite holds good of his opponents in religion: they have often lost sight of social relations. And yet the purity of the family life, and a touch of austerity which goes along with

this purity, have furnished among the German races types of unassuming and unaffected courtesy, which rival the more formal manners of the Latin races. Having said this much, I shall take upon myself to point out an imperfection in bearing which follows straight from a favourite, but questionable, practice of some religious bodies. The practice of public confession, in the various forms of the "experience" meeting, often breaks down the reserve which is the soul's best armour. Persons who have surrendered their inmost citadel in this way, in turn display an eagerness to break through the defences of others; an eagerness which puts its objects instinctively on their guard against intrusion. Sometimes, however, young people are taken unawares, or in a moment of weakness, by these ill-advised, yet well-meaning advances. Those who are responsible, in any way, for the training of the young, will view with apprehension such methods of discipline, an apprehension which is based upon experience of their results. Moreover when a young convert carries the temper so produced into the world, he offends against those valuable habits by which society guards the self-respect of its members, and brings his religious profession into an ill-odour, which it is far from deserving.

It is perhaps comprehensible, therefore, how apart from the traditional hostility of some schools to fine art, the temper which has just been described, in itself and apart from religious tenets, has dis-

couraged the growth of an artistic tradition of any kind. For music and painting and sculpture and architecture are as it were the flower of a rich and harmonious social tradition.

Yet there is a religious spirit which rises above party; which treats religious practices whether these are controlled by public and private confession or not, as a means to an end. For, after all, the details of Church administration which have given rise to so many disputes, do not in themselves necessarily touch the depths of the soul; and it is there that the great events of life take place. Neither confession nor the abstention from confession avail as such, but the entrance upon the life of the spirit. The soul can retire "*far from the shore, far from the trembling throng, whose sails were never to the tempest given.*" Persons who have reached this state sometimes show certain disinclination towards the external usages of religion. Molinos and Madame Guyon and the Society of Friends have united in like manner a responsiveness to spiritual motions combined with a shrinking from outward expression. At the same time it is doubtful whether such a temper of mind will ever become general; and religious organisation which is bound to keep the great mass of mankind in view, cannot be expected to adjust itself to the needs or aspirations of a small minority. Visible symbols and external practices are employed in varying degrees by all bodies of Christians except perhaps the Society of Friends.

Now the same mode of argument can be employed in reference to direction. There are some persons who go through life without ever seeking the advice of others on matters of conduct. But these are, after all, an insignificant minority ; and it is tacitly agreed that willingness to be advised is a kind of duty. Now there are very few persons occupying positions of trust, even of a modest kind, who have not received confidences and been asked for advice and direction in circumstances of perplexity ; and the question at once arises whether this aspect of the pastoral office is to be recognised or not. If the lawyer and the physician are consulted in the most intimate way upon cases of conscience, the Christian minister will be also. And the very claims which his position makes of itself, will assure to him an authority which cannot safely be left undefined. Such a relationship involves a certain bond of *secrecy* ; and, on the other hand, demands a certain understanding of the relative importance of duties when they seem to conflict, that is, a knowledge of *casuistry*.

First, as to the duty of secrecy : confidences received lay the recipient under the obligation to use all lawful means in order to protect them. The person who turns Queen's evidence is felt to sacrifice in so doing his honour as a man ; and this feeling is grounded upon a just view of the moral relations involved. In a similar though a less degree, persons engaged upon secret service break a contract upon which they enter implicitly by

their mere conversation with other men. The correspondents of the daily press, therefore, also move upon the borderland of what is forbidden by a strict code of honour. The person who tells lies to another in order to protect a secret, and the person who breaks a confidence in order to publish it, are scarcely entitled to throw stones at one another.

For it may be taken as a maxim of conduct —though perhaps it would be difficult to defend it in the abstract—that no person is under an obligation to declare to everybody who likes to question him the whole of his knowledge. I will go further, and say that there are some things which men are bound to keep hidden. You who lift your brow indignantly at this, will you undertake to describe publicly every action of your life? You dare not! Public confession, as in the Divorce Court or elsewhere, can never take place without a certain danger to morals. The practice of private confession was begun because of the scandals which were caused by that public confession which some would bring in again. Hence those persons who condemn both public and private confession, affirm in reality that unpopular maxim with which I started; that men are not bound to declare the whole of their knowledge.

Of course this is quite a different thing from saying that they are justified in lying. Only those who have an end to serve, or who think confusedly, will say that silence about a fact is

always equivalent to a lie. And so, although the duty of speaking the truth is plain and of easy application in most cases, and although any attempt to exaggerate the difficulty of speaking the truth meets with the most merited suspicion, it is a treason to Truth herself to say absolutely and without qualification that the whole truth must always be spoken.[1] Ignorant writers sometimes speak as if a man was bound always to declare the whole of what is in his mind. Such a practice would render social life first intolerable and then impossible. We maintain silence sometimes about our beliefs in religion and politics, about our intentions in business, about our preferences and dislikes towards the persons we live with. Still this silence is not lying. But I am not going to leave the matter here. It is very easy for anyone to say that, in the abstract, and apart from practice, truth must always be spoken. And yet, to quote a distinguished English moralist, "most persons would not hesitate to speak falsely to an invalid if this seemed the only way of concealing facts that might produce a dangerous shock; nor do I perceive," says Prof. Sidgwick, "that anyone shrinks from telling fictions to children on matters upon which it is thought well that they should not know the truth."[2] I will add another case. Modesty often dictates statements which are untrue in intention and in expression, that is to say, *lies*. On this case if

[1] Matt. ix. 30; xxi. 27. [2] *Methods of Ethics*,[5] 316.

on no other the universal obligation to veracity breaks down, and the man who declines to admit this exception is indistinguishable from a fool.

Are we to say then that men are not always bound to tell the whole truth ; sometimes not even to tell the truth at all ? And if so, how are we going to escape the descent to the abysses of hell, of which lying constitutes both the top and the bottom ? The exceptional cases I have taken are *known* to be such. No sensible man thinks that truth is at stake when we conceal it in the interests of the invalid, or of childhood, or of modesty. Nor, again, is truth always imperilled by the expedients we adopt to protect confidences. Is it always imperilled in the *ordinary* conscience by the deceit which a spy has to practise in the interest of his country, or a correspondent in the interest of his newspaper, or an advocate in the interest of his client ? If you think so, how are you to read your daily paper, or employ a lawyer, or enjoy our national security ?

Turn from these cases to the relations of social life, of politics and religion. As we have seen, the cases where lying becomes a venial offence are few and simple, and are understood to be such. If, therefore, it is ever said that a man may depart from the truth in social life outside the cases mentioned (p. 276), or in politics, or in religion, it is the same as if one said that lying was an understood convention in these three spheres ; that, in a word, social relations are a tissue of lies, that

politics is a tissue of lies, that religion is a tissue of lies! And the person who extends lying beyond the very narrow and well-defined limits which have been marked out, is guilty of the consequences to which attention has been drawn. The clever parliamentarian who deceives the right person, in the right place, and at the right time; the religious agent who does not scruple to use means despised by ordinary men of honour; the man of affairs who goes beyond the conventional limits of the lie, are already in the depths of hell, when they flatter themselves they are just looking over the brim of the pit. But these cases do not justify us in thinking that a man is to be condemned who *without making use of false statements* protects a confidence from being broken.[1]

Let us turn next to the duties of a director in the cases of conscience submitted to him. I am supposing him now to be dealing with a perplexed conscience not with the confession of a penitent. It is not difficult to see that in practice there must often be a conflict of duties. Each man in addition to the duties he owes to himself and to God is the subject of other duties which arise out of the numerous relations in which he finds himself to other persons. To take a simple instance, which indeed arises out of the question which we have just considered, how far is the obligation to

[1] For simplicity's sake, I suppose the confidence to be referred to the past. Confidences about intentions render their recipients accomplices, if the intentions involve future wrong-doing.

tell the whole truth counterbalanced by considerations of expediency and of respect for the feelings of others? "According to the current assumptions of the writer and the preacher, the one commanding law is that men should cling to truth and right if the very heavens fall. In principle this is universally accepted. To the partisans of authority and tradition it is as much a commonplace as to the partisans of the most absolute and unflinching rationalism. Yet in practice all schools alike are forced to admit the necessity of accommodation in the very interests of truth itself. . . . The interesting question in connection with compromise obviously turns upon the placing of the boundary that divides wise suspense in forming opinions, wise reserve in expressing them, and wise tardiness in trying to realise them, from avowed disingenuousness and self-illusion, from voluntary dissimulation, and from indolence and pusillanimity."[1] This is a question of casuistry. For, in spite of the prejudice against the term, there is plenty of the thing. No one will accuse the author of *Compromise* of blurring moral distinctions and of unfaithfulness to the truth; yet he, as well as the writers attacked by Pascal, affirms the possibility that one duty may conflict with another, that the course of right conduct is not always quite clear, that allowances are to be made for circumstances. It is easy to lay down and to

[1] Morley, *Compromise*, 3.

praise maxims of conduct; what is difficult is to realise them in each particular case.[1]

Casuistry consists in the application of general rules to special cases.[2] We must distinguish between the use of casuistry by the individual as a means of illumining his own judgment, and the dependence of one man upon another in cases of difficulty. Just as medical men when they are ill themselves, put themselves in the hands of a fellow-physician, because, among other reasons, they would find it difficult to take an external and impartial view of their own case, so, in cases of conscience, there seems reason to expect that the moral judgment may be warped by the feelings, and that an external adviser may be of great assistance. The use of casuistry, then, would seem to be that it substitutes for the uncertain guidance of the feelings a more reasoned method. On the other hand, right conduct is for the most part attained by a kind of tact that comes from practice. Hence it is only in exceptional cases, and where there is a real doubt, that casuistry is necessary. On the whole, feeling is found to be a sufficient guide. But it only holds as a guide within the limits of what is familiar, and breaks down amid strange or altered conditions.

The prejudice then which is so widely and deservedly felt against casuistry seems to be directed against its application where there can be no doubt about what is right; that is to say

[1] Matt. xxiii. 3, 4.

[2] Sidgwick, *op. cit.*, 99.

when it is transferred, from what Mr Morley calls the boundary, to the sphere where moral rules are certain.

Hence the conclusion must be drawn that the pulpit can never be the source of particular moral instructions ; that is to say, it can never lay down the line of conduct to be pursued in a particular case by particular persons without the danger of falling into the faults of the casuist. It is not the business of the Christian teacher, therefore, to deal with doubtful cases, but to lay down those general principles from which each man is to draw his own conclusions. Hence it is that the excursions of the clergy into politics, both national and municipal, are so rarely successful. For "it is not prudent, scarcely even safe, for a preacher to go beyond general rules."[1] Only when the judgment is illumined by the knowledge of the leading circumstances of each case, can it speak with anything like certainty ; and this knowledge is usually only possible to those who are immediately conversant with the affairs in question.

It is not difficult to draw the line between one who occasionally consults another in cases of perplexity, and one who continually leans upon the judgment of another. The latter course is a great temptation to the indolent and irresolute. For the mere coming to a decision is itself a somewhat exhausting process, and to some persons it is a positive source of pain. But it is only by such

[1] Purcell, *Life of Manning*, i. 439.

independent decision made from time to time that the will is braced up, and becomes truly self-governing, or autonomous. To rely upon the will of another is to surrender this freedom. Just as perplexity drives some to seek an adviser, so remorse drives others to seek consolation by unbosoming themselves in the act of confession. Here, again, harm seems to arise in the extension to all cases of a practice which is useful in special cases. Where the mind is possessed in a morbid way by a fixed idea, the expression of that idea in words to another seems to lift the subject outside it. "In my university days," says James, "a student threw himself from an upper entry window of one of the college buildings, and was nearly killed. Another student, a friend of my own, had to pass the window daily in coming and going from his room, and experienced a dreadful temptation to imitate the deed. Being a Catholic, he told his director, who said, 'All right, if you must you must,' and added, 'Go ahead and do it,' thereby instantly quenching his desire. This director knew how to minister to a mind diseased."[1] This example will suggest considerations as to the way in which other temptations may sometimes be lightened by advice from a wise director.

On the whole it would appear that the tendency of the confessional is to an indulgent view of sin, and the penitent is let off more easily by another than by his own conscience. The practice of

[1] *Textbook of Psychology*, 446.

the Jesuits in this direction is well known and may be paralleled by an anecdote of St Vincent de Paul. He "was frequently heard to say that he had only three times in his life spoken sharply in finding fault, thinking at the time there was cause to do so, and that he had repented ever since, for that it had done no good; whereas, on the contrary, he had never failed by gentle words to obtain what he desired." [1]

In addition to the dangers already pointed out, p. 272, public confession in its various forms is a school of hypocrisy. When a number of persons of different sexes, or of different ages, undertake to relate their experiences, there must be one of two alternatives; either a full confession which is for many reasons impossible, or a partial and therefore misleading one. If the confessor hears in private what should scarcely be said by one human being to another, we can judge whether public confession is likely to be edifying. And so, I repeat, if private confession sometimes leads to scandal, public confession leads to hypocrisy.

In the third place, advice is sometimes sought in the conduct of the devotional life. In spiritual things "we have great need of a director and of conference with spiritual persons." [2] Both St Teresa and St John of the Cross dwell upon the harm that is often done when incompetent persons undertake the difficult office of direction.

[1] *Life*, Wilson, 220.

[2] *Cf. supra*, p. 131, St Teresa, *Life*, xix. 23.

"I have met with souls cramped and tormented, because he who directed them had no experience: that made me sorry for them. Some of them knew not what to do with themselves, for directors who do not understand the spirit of their penitents afflict them soul and body and hinder their progress." [1]

The cure of souls, then, in the elaborate form which we have just considered, demands qualities of mind and heart which are far from frequent, and make the onlooker wonder at the presumption of those who undertake such offices without personal fitness or preparation. St Chrysostom said, "the weakness of my soul makes me useless for this ministry." [2]

[1] St Teresa, *Life*, xiii. 21. [2] *De sacerd.*, 124.

CHAPTER XIII

MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

The winning of the soul—Spiritualising of experience—Feeling and judgment—Tradition — Scholasticism — Its relation to moral consistency—Origen and Thomas—Mystical theology—Disinterested thought as revelation, especially in ethics—Direction towards God—Practice of His presence—The divine nature—The form of eternity—The Trinity.

THE soul is not present in all its completeness from the first. It has to be gained amid the tumult of experience. Augustine speaks of himself as being gathered together after the dispersion in which he had been broken into fragments, while, turning from God, he had faded away into a multitude of things.[1] His intentions were divided, his thoughts were divided. "There is," he says, "a spiritual sickness when the mind fails to rise up as a whole, lifted by truth."[2] The very conflicts of heart and thought in which Augustine passed his life, seem to have made him more susceptible to the nature of that spiritual harmony after which he strove. He unites the aspirations to intellectual and to moral unity in his maxim: "Every part is base which does not agree with its own universe."[3]

[1] *Conf.* ii. 1. [2] *Ib.*, viii. 9. [3] *Ib.*, iii. 8.

We have already considered the tendency towards unity from the side of the individual soul, as directed towards the universes of intellectual and moral judgment and of feeling.[1] We are now going to consider the same process on its side towards God as a revelation of His nature. For it is impossible to distinguish except in thought between an experience on its human and on its divine side.[2] Taken in its detail, there is but little in human experience to suggest and embody the divine nature, but when human life is viewed as a whole, and the various relations between its parts are made out, they point to a solution of the enigma of life and a clue to its mazes.

In this way human experience is made to reveal its spiritual meaning. This is indeed the method of philosophy generally. Nevertheless, the attempt has been made to construct a religious philosophy not from any experience but by the mere juxtaposition of texts of Scripture. But such a method is self-condemned. Thought cannot take place in that way. Not only so; the Scriptures themselves thus regarded lose all spiritual signification. It is not the record, but the life recorded which is divine. Unless the events described in Scripture and the ideals portrayed in it are referred to God, the Scripture is no more than any other history. And on the

[1] 89 *ff.* *Cf.* Vaughan, *Stones from the Quarry*, p. 52.

[2] The terms "subjective" and "objective" are nearly equivalent to these two aspects of an event.

other hand, the history of any age is spiritualised when it is referred to Him.

In this reference we can mark off the feeling which suffuses it from intellectual apprehension. We are now going to leave on one side the feeling, in order to concentrate ourselves upon the intellectual apprehension, or judgment. This judgment may be analysed into the affirmation of an object, and the direction towards it. Let us make this clear. There is in the religious attitude towards God, first, the aspiration [1] towards Him; second, the direction of the thoughts upon Him; third, the affirmation of His being. This is the natural order in which the religious apprehension works as an *original* power. In the religious tradition this order is inverted. There is first the affirmation of God's being in dogma; second, the presentation of God in religious instruction; third, the aspiration towards Him in common worship. This is the natural order in which religious truth must be communicated and handed down. In this way, that which has been gained in the experience of the saints becomes the common property of mankind, like that which has been gained by the investigations of scientific men in the sphere of natural truth. And so we reach the conclusion of St Thomas Aquinas that theology which starts from the Scriptures may draw conclusions also from saints and thinkers in their degree.[2]

[1] *I.e.* a feeling.

[2] *Summa*, i. 1, 8.

It is not difficult to trace in St Paul and St John a certain scholastic element. By this it is meant that they cast their thoughts into certain moulds or forms of thought. The beginning of the *Fourth Gospel* is a sufficient answer to those who say that Christianity does not admit of a philosophic presentation. The case is even more pronounced with the apostle to the Gentiles. The suggestions of Jewish ritual and of Rabbinical tradition give the form to Paul's thoughts about the career of Jesus. But the very suitability of this method to the communities among whom Paul worked, renders him difficult of comprehension amid the entirely transformed surroundings of modern times. Only so far as we translate theological statements into the universal terms of human experience do they retain their meaning. And, with all its faults, this was at least the ideal of the scholastic philosophy which culminated in the Angelic Doctor. The pages of the *Summa Theologica* have still a fulness of human interest for those who can read between the lines, an interest comparable to that of the *Divina Commedia*; the *Summa* containing, as it were, the core of thought round which Dante built his poem. Compared with the *Summa*, the theological system of Calvin which shuts itself up to the letter of scripture and cuts itself off from the whole course of mediæval thought, is a retrogression. It no longer finds us.

For scholasticism rests upon the search for

consistency. In conduct it shows itself in that scrupulous self-examination by which the intentions and acts are drilled into complete conformity with a given standard. In the world of thought it attempts to solve all contradictions and to bring every side of experience to unity. "Sacred thoughts will never be at variance."[1] And the attempt of St Thomas to bring into one great harmony the whole of the theology and philosophy of his time, has furnished an example which will have to be followed by every theology which is to retain more than a transient importance. It is not as though the *Summa* involved any breach with the primitive tradition. Its method had already been laid down by Origen, although for that matter the *Summa* is only a partial realisation of that method. The universality of Origen is shown by the fact that subsequent controversialists of all parties drew upon him.[2] Since in Origen, Greek philosophy is reconciled with the Christian experience, we may expect that his method will not be exhausted by Thomas, for whom Greek philosophy was only available at second hand. And so we come to the precise contrary of the conclusion reached by Dr Hatch in his *Hibbert Lectures*. It is not a question of separating Christianity from philosophy in general, and in particular from Greek philosophy. Unless thought about the Christian tradition is to be forbidden, it will move along lines already foreshadowed in

[1] Tertullian, *de anima*, 21.

[2] Harnack in *Enc. Brit.*

the history of the past. What is required is to distinguish between the original elements in the tradition and later reflection upon them. But in so doing we are not bound to reject the later elements as worthless.

We have already become familiar with an aspect of thought which is pointed at in the term *revelation*. The soul does not develop all its experiences from within itself. It gains them in its intercourse with the surroundings of its life. And the same holds good in the highest realms of thought. The objective constitution of the world of thought is not entirely created from within the mind. It is disclosed through the operations of the mind, but it goes beyond those operations. They are directed towards an object,—an object which, no less than sensible objects, is pointed at, not exhausted (p. 7). "What I am obliged to think may represent a real development depending on law, and a system which is not confined to my individual course of consciousness."[1] Thus there is a passive stage in reflection at which thoughts seem to come to us rather than to arise within us. All this arises out of the dependence of the soul when we consider it as a person in an ordered realm of persons (p. 50).

Hence there is a real, though somewhat exaggerated, meaning in the utterances of St Teresa about mystical theology. "In mystical theology the understanding ceases from its acts because God suspends it." Or, again, God is said "to

[1] Bosanquet, *Essentials of Logic*, 13.

accomplish in an instant the labour of twenty years and without any fatiguing of the understanding."[1] When the mind reaches the attitude of self-forgetfulness and laying aside all prepossessions sets itself to receive the truth, it may be said to cease from the acts of the understanding; and in so doing it reaches the temper for which reflection of the highest kind first becomes possible—that objective temper in which the soul sees things in a clear light. This is the purity of heart upon which the divine vision follows, the stillness that is required for the knowledge of God.

Hence there is a very genuine difference between the attitude of religious reflection and the reflection that is conversant with immediate interests. In this respect scientific and philosophic reflection partake of the character of revelation, in so far as these two modes of thought represent an advance of the soul beyond itself.

We can mark off a similar advance in the sphere of conduct. When a man rises above his private interests to the love of God, he is enabled by a kind of revelation—that is a disclosing of truth already there — to see the duties which attach to his own station or that of another man, in a way which is quite impossible to one who is governed by the ordinary motives of self-interest. This higher mode of thought, then, is no property of the lonely devotee or thinker, but is attainable by every person of good intention. The

[1] *Life*, xii. 8; xvii. 3.

spiritual peace in which God comes to the soul is available upon earth—that is amid the daily circumstances of life—for men of good intention. Hence the criticism which Ritschl directs against the mystical standpoint falls to the ground.[1] For the mystic, ethics may take an equal position with abstract speculation, the mystical temper being shown even more in the silent affirmations of conduct than in the explicit thought. Or rather the principles upon which we act, are those also which give rise to any real thought. Mysticism consists primarily in a mode of life, and then in a mode of reflection. Mysticism was described as a habit of mind that discerns the spiritual in common things, and so transfigures them into revelations of the divine.[2] How is it to be described on its active side? it is a mode of life which is governed not by the isolated promptings of instinct at first or even at second hand, but by an ideal. Hence, so far as religious life consists only in obedience to externally imposed rules of conduct and belief, it is not yet mystical. And it only becomes mystical when the objects of conduct and belief are stated in the terms of the spiritual experience, an experience which is made our own.

The direction of the soul, therefore, towards God takes two shapes; on the one hand all conduct is referred to Him as its end, and, on the other hand, the course of the world is viewed in relation to Him as Governor. But in these acts of reference

[1] *Theologie u. Metaphysik*, 28. [2] *Supra*, p. 41.

God communicates Himself to the soul in such a way that many persons have preferred to regard the qualities described, as *graces infused into the soul.* This relation is brought into clear consciousness by what may be called the practice of the presence of God, in which these acts of the mind are related to Him as their ground. "The injunction to private prayer calls for faith in such a way that the sight and hearing of Almighty God are believed to be present in secret."[1] I am inclined to doubt whether the presence of God is realised so often as the glib use of the theological vernacular would lead one to think, and will appeal to a passage in the life of Dale. The idea of God has scarcely ever received more eloquent expression than in the writings of the Birmingham preacher; and yet he has had the candour to disclose, at least to himself, the fact that the hold of the spirit upon God varies from time to time. On one occasion he acknowledges to himself that he was "too weak to find much direct consolation in the eternal springs of strength and joy. God was a kind of background to everything—hardly discerned but there; this was all."[2]

For the religious world in general the practice of the presence of God tends to yield to that of the presence of Christ, as described by St Teresa. "The soul may also place itself in the presence of Christ and accustom itself to many acts of love directed to His sacred Humanity, and remain in

[1] Tertullian, *de oratione*, i. [2] *Life*, 611.

His presence continually, and speak to Him, pray to Him in its necessities, and complain to Him of its troubles ; be merry with Him in its joys, and yet not forget Him because of its joys."[1] There is no doubt that for many persons the idea of God is entirely represented in the person of Jesus. It is an interesting and important question how far we ought to be content with this, a question that most theologians seem to have refused to meet in the fear lest doubts should be cast upon their orthodoxy. One or two considerations may be raised. We have seen that a complex ideal can only become articulate in a person ;[2] and so the love of Jesus, in whom the different virtues combined in perfect harmony, is far more efficacious in helping men to realise the divine love and justice than if they contemplate the divine attributes in an unreal isolation. It is obviously impossible for the human mind to compass the being of God ; and unless the Supreme were presented in an Object conformable to the limitations of the human mind, it is difficult to see how the adequate worship of God could be attained. At the same time there are those who forget that such a view of the person of Christ as that which is indicated here, has for its presupposition the doctrine of the Trinity. Unless the human life of Jesus is viewed against the background of the divine, it loses its meaning.

Through observing the limitations of human nature it is possible to rise to a partial and incom-

[1] *Life*, xii. 3. [2] P. 15.

plete, but yet positive idea of God. This seems to be pointed at in the method of "Dionysius, the Areopagite." Over against the dependent nature of man, God stands as that which exists in itself. "Other things," says St Augustine, "I found neither to be altogether, nor yet not to be. They were, since they were from Thee; they were not, since they were not what Thou art."[1] Further, in that which exists of itself, there can be nothing which is merely accidental.[2] God is not just and merciful, but rather justice and mercy themselves. And men are only just and merciful in so far as they partake of the divine nature. "All other truths depend on this Truth, as all other loves on this Love, and all other grandeurs on this Grandeur."[3] Further, the relation between that which is dependent and that on which it depends, is not solved by the idea of creation only. God is the maintainer of the universe: "just as the soul animates the body, so God animates the soul. God is the life of life."[4] He is, to quote a poet who worshipped God without naming him—

That light whose smile kindles the universe,
That beauty in which all things work and move.
That benediction which the eclipsing curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst.

[1] *Conf.* vii. 11. [2] *Summa*, I. iii. 6. [3] Teresa, *Life*, xl. 7.
[4] Augustine, *Conf.* x. 6, *cf.* p. 70, *supra*.

In such a nature evil can only be present as a privation of good. In the case of human freedom, however, God seems to have set limits to Himself, in order that mankind might reach the utmost limits of being which were possible to a dependent existence. The only thing, therefore, in the universe that is positively evil seems to be a perverted will, just as the only thing that is positively good seems to be the good will.

Things, as such, are products of a limited apprehension ; things are, in fact, modifications which give definite expression to the true existence.[1] But so soon as their true aspect is realised, they cease to exist independently ; they are no longer things in the ordinary sense of the word. In their place appear limited participations in the one true existence. Their reality[2] is derivative. So long, therefore, as we continue to regard them in their apparent independence, they are not truly understood. Only when they are viewed as part of the universe in their relation to God, do we begin to know them. But this direct reference to God is not usual ; between God and the individual thing there stands the system to which it belongs, Nature. The reference, therefore, of things to the order of the world is one step on the way to their reference to God. When, however, we pass from the course of the world to its ground, the distinctions of time and space lose their importance. This is a genuine

[1] Erdmann, *History of Philosophy*, E. trans., ii. 63.
[2] =thing-hood.

advance in thought, and is marked off by St John of the Cross. When the soul is uplifted to the divine manner of apprehension, it feels and judges about things in the same way as God, to whose sight "a thousand years are as yesterday when it is past."[1] At the same time we may not treat the timeless view of things as if it were the final one. Ideas apart from their historical expression are meaningless. If, on the one hand, things are unreal apart from their ground, on the other hand if their ground did not so express itself, it is as good as nothing. Hence it may be said that the world is as necessary to God as God is to the world; or in other words, that it is the necessary expression of His being. Hence there is a reciprocal relation between the two which is formulated in the relation which holds between the Father and the Son in the Trinity. We begin by distinguishing appearance from that of which it is the appearance; and we end by attributing to each factor—the appearance and the ground,—a necessity by which they stand over against one another and yet are united; and this necessity finds its expression in the life of the Spirit.[2]

[1] *Living Flame of Love*, verse 1, line 6.
[2] *Stones from the Quarry*, p. 52.

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